

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PADOVA

DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE POLITICHE, GIURIDICHE E
STUDI INTERNAZIONALI

Corso di laurea *Magistrale* in
European and Global Studies



'GLOBAL NORTH' INTERVENTIONS IN MENA
REGION: A POST-DEVELOPMENT CRITICAL
ANALYSIS

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A.A. ...2020/2021...

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who supported me through this journey, providing me both strength and stimulus to believe in my work.

A special word of thanks to:

Professor Mauro Farnesi Camellone, my dissertation supervisor for providing guidance and feedback throughout the research process,

Federico Scabbia, a friend and economist with whom I shared perspectives,

My mother, that taught me the basis and value of critical thinking.

Abstract

The first conceptual clarification that seems necessary to offer is the definition of terms like 'Global North' and 'Global South' which will be recurring concepts within the present analysis. The former refers to both Western historically hegemonic nations and non-Western colonized but powerful ruling elites, while the latter stands for both exploited ethnic, or social minorities in strong countries and historically colonized weaker nations. Thus, the terms 'Global South' and 'Global North' are not merely geographic concepts, they are used to distinguish ruling countries, both geopolitically and economically influent, from the traditionally exploited ones. However, for the purpose of the present analysis, the term 'Global North' will be employed to describe mainly Western countries, which share the same economic, political, and social features, and which present themselves as model to countries characterized by different economic structures and various growth rates.

Therefore, this work aims at examining, through a critical perspective, the Western 'development programs' implemented by the international bodies vis-à-vis North African and Middle Eastern countries. Both European Union's actions and the interventions of the International Financial Institutions are being analyzed, following an historical-conceptual path, and through the support of theoretical frameworks. Reference case study will be provided in order to examine causes and effects of Western interventions in MENA (North Africa and Middle East) region, highlighting both their strength and weaknesses. The overall objective of this research is to confront and emphasize the differences between mainstream development theories and post-colonial alternative approaches; through a deep analysis of those paradigms, it would be possible to assess which may be the most appropriate perspective that could be take into consideration when dealing with cooperation and dialogue between Western countries and MENA region.

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Introduction

In the aftermath of the Second World War and at the beginning of the decolonization process, the contemporary international institutions were born, due to the challenges posed by the changed global order – namely, the necessity of creating free trade areas, of achieving the currencies stability, and of coordinating foreign policies against the ‘communist threat’ raised by the Soviet bloc. A further reason which supported the birth of those institutions may be found in the necessity, felt by the Western colonial powers, to maintain an overall – political-economic rather than military – control over the former colonies.

The present analysis is being conducted in order to examine, as comprehensively as possible, the nature of the Western interventions in North Africa and Middle East, by questioning if, and to what extent, the perspective wherewith the European Union and the other international institutions have implemented from the 1960s onward, the so called ‘development programs’ vis-à-vis North African and Middle Eastern countries, has been of capital-centric and Eurocentric nature. Furthermore, this work also aims at envisaging alternative forms of development that, until recent times, have been obscured by the predominant neo-liberal and neo-classical patterns which impose themselves in international relations.

Thus, the main objective of this research is to discover whether the EU and the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) are adopting the right and effective path to promote an overall development in MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. In doing so, it will be deemed important to understand what kind of development these institutions are promoting, and what kind of interests exist behind their attempt to foster growth and progress in the area under question.

Consequently, a special attention will be paid to the understanding of whether the concept of ‘development’ is seen as a matter of political or economic urgency in a globalized society: the in-depth analysis of programs and agreements promoted by the international institutions will provide a first answer this question. Afterwards, mainstream and alternative theories of development will be examined and compared in order to offer a broader possible view on how development is seen and should be seen.

For the purpose of answering to these multiple questions, the most appropriate research methodology appeared to be an historical-conceptual analysis that retraces the nature of the social bonds originated by the capitalist mode of production, the character of the power relations both before and after the independence of colonies, and the international ties established between Western countries and MENA region.

The present study will begin with an overview of the European foreign policy, starting from the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957 and focusing in particular on the legitimization, by the agreement itself, of associating overseas territories which had had special relationships with EEC Member States – e.g. former colonies. From that moment on, the European Economic Community began to increase its competitiveness vis-à-vis United States, by concluding association and commercial agreements with, among other, Greece (1961), Turkey (1963), Israel (1964), Lebanon (1965), and ACP countries (1975). By the way, it will be demonstrated if the commercial exchange between the EEC and these African and Asian countries has historically been based on equality.

On the political side, it will be seen how the European Union formalized the institutionalization of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) only in 1992, through the Maastricht Treaty, implementing a defense and security cooperation as an effect of both Iraqi invasion of Kuwait (1990) and the Yugoslav wars (1991); the Petersberg Declaration of 1992 legitimized the use of force during peacekeeping missions and crisis management situations. In 2000, the Nice Treaty institutionalized the European Security Defense Policy (ESDP) and the Lisbon Treaty of 2009 has created the European External Action Service. The major State actors in some geopolitical crisis will be also mentioned.

In the second half of the first chapter, the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) vis-à-vis North African and Middle Eastern countries will be analyzed, from its inception in 2004, through its reviews of 2011 and 2015, and towards the new strategy from 2021 onward. The key features of the ENP will be examined, highlighting its foundations on the EU promotion of its values, the ‘securitarian’ approach through which the neighborhood policy has been conceived, and the ultimate purpose of creating a Free Trade Area with neighboring countries. These cornerstones will be further examined and challenged in later chapters, being among the critical points of the present work.

The last part of the chapter will focus on the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011, underlining their causes and effects in MENA region, and dwelling on some case study: Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Syria. It will be seen how the social discontent has led, for the majority of cases, to the dismissal of governments in office subsequently replaced by other non-democratic politicians or military regimes, sometimes supported by European powers.

The second section of the present analysis will be dedicated to the examination of capital-centric development; an overall Marxian theorization on the ‘social individual’ in relations of production will be provided, encompassing the difference among pre-capitalist and capitalist social structures. Subsequently, the meanings of ‘exchange value’ and ‘use value’ will be clarified, underlining the supremacy of the former over the latter in capitalist regimes. The significance of ‘exchange value’ will lead to the conceptualization, by the Marxian philosopher Ruy Mauro Marini, that foreign trade constitutes one of the means for the capitalist to make super profit, through the extraction of extraordinary surplus value in low wages countries – ‘peripheral areas’ or ‘dependent region’.

On the other hand, neo-classical and neo-liberal patterns will be examined as mainstream theories that are considered predominant in regulating international economic relations. These paradigms conceive the individual as ‘homo oeconomicus’, meaning that he shows itself able to sequentially dispose his preferences, maximizing his satisfaction through the achievement of utility, by also analyzing and predicting his best alternatives. Moreover, neoliberal approaches adopted in the market today, are based on the need to eliminate control on prices, to deregulate capital market and to lower trade barriers, reducing at the same time the intervention of the State in the economy; the extent to which these paradigms have been implemented also in developing countries will be clarified. Neoliberal and neoclassical approaches will be examined together with the behavioral economics which claims that deviations from mainstream models exist and have to be studied through psychology, explaining that individuals are not always rational and some behavioral distortions should be studied also when dealing with developing countries.

After having deeply examined some of the possible economic theoretical frameworks, International Financial Institutions’ strategies for promoting development in MENA

region will be dealt. Starting from the idea that both the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are implementing neo-liberal and neo-classical policies – although at the expense of the social wellness and equality of North African and Middle Eastern countries – the failure, at the hands of the international bodies, to take into account the important difference between productive and protective welfare states will be highlighted and challenged.

The last part of the second chapter will concern the provision of case study on International Financial Institutions interventions in MENA region: causes and effects of Structural Adjustment Programs and of other economic aid plans will be examined in Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, and Jordan, starting from the first ‘development programs’ during 1960s, until today.

Within the last chapter of this work, the post-development paradigm will be taken into consideration as an alternative pattern to the promotion of Western-centric growth and progress. The first necessary specification will concern the definition of terms like Eurocentrism, ‘Global North’, and ‘Global South’: the conception of modernity will be considered as the prevailing Western worldview since the Renaissance period and the means through which the ‘Global North’ is indirectly imposing its values to the South.

Subsequently, the concept of Eurocentric development as economic growth and industrial progress will be deconstructed in order to think in a ‘decolonial perspective’; the theories supported by post-development advocates, like Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Serge Latouche will be examined at this purpose.

In explaining how this change should be implemented, the re-politicization of power relations will be analyzed as necessary means to build a new social bond based upon the emancipation of the informal. After having described how the social structures should be rebuilt, the key features of post-development societies will be deepened: the political, the economic, and the knowledge systems will be investigated. In doing so, Kurdish self-administered canton in Rojava will be the reference case study; experiments of participant – or radical – democracy and of Social Solidarity Economy will be deepened.

The last part of the third chapter will sort through the most important barriers to the implementation of alternative forms of development: from geopolitical relations shortcomings, to the influence of interest groups on decision-making, until weaknesses

inside North Africa and Middle Eastern countries in matter of corruption and lack of democratic structures.

Chapter I

The Common Foreign and Security Policy and the European Neighborhood Policy

1.1. The origins of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)

1.1.1. Steps towards an European Political Cooperation on foreign policy: Cold War period

Since the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC), established in 1957, the coordination among foreign policies of the members was considered necessary, especially since the United States, being the “sponsor” of the European integration, was influencing the European foreign policy by labeling it as anti-communist and anti-Soviet. In fact, consultations on the subject of the foreign and security policy took place within the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); for this reason, it appears quite obvious that, during the Cold War period, the European foreign policy could not be considered as fully independent.

Furthermore, the part four – “*Association of the overseas countries and territories*” – of the Treaty of Rome¹ legitimized the European Economic Community to foster external trade relations especially with regard to third countries having special relations with some Member States – e.g. former colonies – in order to assist them towards the

¹ European Economic Community, *The Treaty of Rome, Part Four, Association of the overseas countries and territories, Article 131*, Rome 25 March 1957, p. 46.

Accessed at: https://ec.europa.eu/archives/emu_history/documents/treaties/rometreaty2.pdf

development way. Even in this case, the connection between US and EEC foreign policies was manifested; the President Harry S. Truman's conception of aid (*1949, Point Four Program*) towards 'developing countries' was based on the technical assistance at the hands of the US and other 'developed' countries, in order to ensure the improvement their economic, social and political conditions.

In fact, during the 1960s, the European Economic Community made its first steps to build a development policy². In 1963 the first association agreement between the EEC and its former colonies was signed: the Youndé Convention, a treaty between the Members of the EEC and 18 countries of the Associated African States and Madagascar (AASM), whose purpose was the promotion of free trade between the two parties of the agreement.

Before England's accession to the EEC, the Youndé Convention was mainly targeted toward countries of francophone Africa; after 1973, the agreement sought to include also Africa members of the British Commonwealth and the other former colonies in the Caribbean and Pacific. Thus, the Lomé Convention of 1975 succeeded the Youndé Agreement aiming to include former colonies of Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP countries) within the framework of the treaty; the use of the European Development Fund (EDF) provided an aid allocation directed to foster industrialization in those areas considered underdeveloped.

If the main objective of the EEC was to broaden the free-trade system in the context of a market-oriented economy, the participation of the six Members of the EEC to the GATT Kennedy Round (1963-1967) was certainly an outstanding way to emerge as a world trading power. The EEC, in fact, had signed a large number of commercial agreements with Greece (1961), Turkey (1963), Israel (1964), Lebanon (1965) and with the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency Countries (1963); the Community was about to further expanding its trade relations with Mediterranean, Central Asian and African countries. By the end of 1960s, the EEC exports had reached the 265 percent within the free trade area and the 113 percent with third countries; the commercial gap between the EEC and the US was thus diminishing³.

² F. Bindi, I. Angelescu, *The Foreign Policy of the European Union: Assessing Europe's Role in the World*, Brookings Inst Pr., 2° edition, 1 June 2012, Chapter 1, pp. 13-38.

³ *ibid.*

After the decolonization wave of 1950s and 1960s, the EEC therefore hastened to constitute trade links with the former colonies in order to increase its productivity and hence the competitiveness with the regard to the United States.

The critical point of these international business links with third countries was the fact that the commercial exchange between the “Global North” and the South was not equal: the manufacturing sector of the “Global South” was not able to compete with the countries more industrially developed and, for this reason, former colonies participated to the global market exporting raw materials. The prices of these primary products were low because they were controlled by multinational corporations and established by the Western stock exchanges, while the prices of the manufactured products were structurally high compared to those of raw materials. According to that logic, the high cost of the processed products has had the effect of drastically reducing the revenues from the exportation of raw materials so as to prevent or obstruct the accumulation of capital required to get development programs, while forcing third countries to resort to foreign loans⁴.

Having mentioned the concept of “unequal exchange” – that is still actual – it can be argued that, even if a lot of third-world countries had become independent, the business relationship between the “Global North” and the “Global South” was not based on equality.

Thus, the European foreign policy of the Cold World period was mainly of a commercial nature and it also expressed the willingness to pursue a sort of connection with the former colonies, not considering them, in many respects, as equal to the Western world.

From the strictly political point of view, the EEC was beginning to take the first steps towards an European Political Cooperation (EPC) in order to deal jointly with the common interests in the field of foreign policy.

⁴ A. Emmanuel, *Unequal Exchange: A Study of the Imperialism of Trade*, The Journal of Economic History, December 1974, pp. 1033-1035.

In this area, however, the intergovernmental dimension permeated the high politics of external affairs, confining the ‘supranational’ institutions of the European Economic Community to low politics of commercial diplomacy⁵.

In 1961, the French President Charles De Gaulle presented an ambitious project for the realization of a political cooperation between the members of the EEC; the Fouchet Plan, a first step made by De Gaulle for improving the intergovernmental nature of European political and social relations, while at the same time acquiring independence from the United States and the NATO.

The draft treaty submitted by Christian Fouchet proposed cooperation in the areas of foreign policy and defense, science, culture and human rights protection, achievable, in institutional terms, through the establishment of a Council composed by Heads of State or Government and a Council of Foreign Ministers; the supranational Assembly of the Communities would have just an advisory role.

Even if the draft treaty of the Fouchet Plan was rejected by Benelux countries which would support a more federalist alternative but less independent from the United States, it seems particularly important to underline how the Fouchet Plan was a prediction of the Common Foreign and Security Policy of today’s EU, where the sovereignty of the States is far more important than the decisions of the supranational bodies – i.e. EU Commission and Parliament.

However, it is worth noting that the Fouchet Plan, even if it has not been implemented, was considered as a first step towards the realization of the European Political Cooperation (EPC).

The concept of the EPC was reopened during the Hague Summit of 1969, where the Foreign Ministers of the Six were charged with drawing up a report on the possible cooperation of the foreign policies of members of the EEC.

The Foreign Ministers presented the Davignon Report in 1970 and the Tindemans Report on the European Union in 1976: the first proposal aimed at building a system of regular consultations among the Six on foreign policy in order to create a consensus on international matters; then, the Political Affairs Committee of the European Parliament

⁵ H. Wallace *et al.*, *Policy-making in the European Union*, Eight edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2020, pp. 389-391.

was supposed to be informed of the outcomes of those meetings, and the Commission was to be consulted on issues falling within its remit.

The Tindemans Report elaborated a more federalist proposal since it envisaged the extension of the powers and the authority of both the Commission and the Parliament; Leo Tindemans, the Belgian Prime Minister, advocated the need for the universal suffrage to be applied for the Members of the Parliament before the end of 1978, by endowing it with the right to propose legislation.

The Report also foresaw the extension of majority voting system within the Council and, in matters of foreign policy, a legal obligation on Member States to agree on a common position, using the majority voting, when necessary; according to Leo Tindemans, Europe had to present itself united outward, vis-à-vis the rest of the world. This ambitious Report, due to economic conditions within European institutions, was not adopted in its entirety, but it generated a request from the Council of Foreign Ministers and from the Commission to draw up an annual report containing all progresses towards the European Union⁶.

1.1.2. The post-Cold War period: the launch of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, in 1989, the conventional date to determine the end of the Cold War, the international order crumbled marking the failure of the bipolar system and, at the same time, showing the birth of new power centers and emerging threats for Western countries.

Hence, the need to consolidate the European Political Cooperation became increasingly necessary in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War also to enable the EEC to emerge as a power center united, with common interests to the outside world.

Furthermore, some geopolitical developments quickened the institutionalization of an European common foreign policy; the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, above all, which saw a direct involvement of France, Germany and UK, amongst other, by the side of the US-led coalition, rendered essential the establishment of both a European defense

⁶ E. Deschamps, *European Political Cooperation*, CVCE. European Navigator, July 2016. Accessed at: < https://www.cvce.eu/obj/european_political_cooperation-en-23ec8fd2-1ae6-4133-91a5-4788e2e184bf.html > (September 2021)

policy and a communitarian military apparatus able to face wars and to represent the military capability of European countries.

It is worth noting that, in the context of Middle Eastern affairs, the European countries participating to the Gulf War on the side of the US, automatically aligned themselves with the interventionist Washington's policy with regard to the Middle-East, including the struggle against Islamism and terrorism.

A second international development which fostered the EPC was the Yugoslav wars, started in 1991, which did not represent a real threat to none of European countries' vital interests, but nevertheless stimulated the Western European Union (WEU) to strategically intervene from the political, economic and organizational points of view.

The French President Roland Dumas, on July 1991, proposed to send WEU's peacekeeping forces in Yugoslavia, even if a military apparatus of the European Community was not created. This French proposal aimed at redefining the role of the EC in the changing international scenario of the years following the Cold War; furthermore, the negotiations on the Maastricht Treaty led European countries, such as France, to believe in a bright future for the European Union. In fact, as reported by *The New York Times* in 1991⁷, public opinion, but also institutions thought that those years would have been 'the hour of Europe', and France supported all proposals addressed to strengthen the EC and to build an European common foreign policy independent from NATO; the setting up of an European peacekeeping operation ready to intervene in Yugoslavia was considered as the first step to translate the EPC into action.

But on the contrary, French proposal was not accepted because Great Britain and other European countries refused to handle an operation that would have been independent of NATO and in which the State sovereignty and intergovernmental principles would have been neglected in the name of the supranational foundations of the EC.

Abandoned the idea of the constitution of an European army and after the UN resolution of 1992 about the legitimization of using force, the United Nations Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) and armies of NATO and WEU countries began to intervene in the context of Yugoslav wars, especially the attack of 1995 in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

⁷A. Riding, *Conflict in Yugoslavia; Europeans send high level team*, *The New York Times*, 29th June 1991, Section 1, p. 4.

Accessed at: < <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/06/29/world/conflict-in-yugoslavia-europeans-send-high-level-team.html> > (September 2021)

These developments in Yugoslavia, even if they showed a general unpreparedness of the EC as a union, naturally influenced both the negotiations on Maastricht Treaty and the intergovernmental conferences on the constitution of the Common Foreign and Security Policy.⁸

Thus, with the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty on February 1992, the Common Foreign and Security Policy was formally established as the “second pillar”, together with the fields of Justice and Home Affairs and the Economic Community respectively as the “third pillar” and the “first pillar”.

The article J.1 of the title V of the Maastricht Treaty, which deals with the “Provisions on a Common Foreign and Security Policy”, reads:

« The objectives of the common foreign and security policy shall be: - to safeguard the common values, fundamental interests and independence of the Union; - to strengthen the security of the Union and its Member States in all ways; - to preserve peace and strengthen international security, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter as well as the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and the objectives of the Paris Charter; - to promote international cooperation; - to develop and consolidate democracy and the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.⁹ »

As stated in this first article of the title V of the Maastricht Treaty, a Common Foreign and Security Policy was thus institutionalized, underlining the need for “common positions” and “joint actions” in order to deal together with international issues, by “limiting”, in a certain sense, the individual action of the Member States.

Nevertheless, the European Union was still far from applying a real supranational approach towards matters of foreign policy, since, as stated in the Article J.3 of the title V, the Council of the EU (the Council of Ministers) had – and still has – quasi-exclusive powers in the field of external affairs, in deciding what issue requires further attention, or joints actions.

⁸ S. Lucarelli, *Fattori interni ed internazionali nella gestione delle guerre Jugoslave. Teorie a confronto*, in 'Studi Politici. Numero monografico dedicato all'Europa Centro Orientale', EUT Edizioni Università di Trieste 1999, pp. 279-312.

⁹ European Union, *Treaty on European Union*, Official Journal of the European Communities, Maastricht 1992, *Title V, Art. J.1*, p.95.

Accessed at: < https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2002/4/9/2c2f2b85-14bb-4488-9ded-13f3cd04de05/publishable_en.pdf > (September 2021)

In fact, as noted in the Article J.7, the European Parliament shall be consulted on the proposals, keeping in regular contact with the Council and making recommendations when needed, but it has no power of adoption during decision-making process in matters of European foreign policy.

Turning to the area of defense, the Article J.4 underlines that all issues falling under questions related to the security of the Union shall be included in the Common Foreign and Security Policy, tracking, when possible, common defense actions with regard to issues that could undermine the integrity of the WEU or jeopardize its Members.

It is also stressed, within the same article, that the common defense policy of the Union shall not prejudice the obligations of its Members with regard to the North Atlantic Treaty and shall comply with NATO's defense policy. Furthermore, the constitution of bilateral agreements or close cooperation between two Member States, that does not affect the WEU and NATO's policies, are allowed¹⁰.

It might be inferred that the European defense policy outlined in the Maastricht Treaty, has more intergovernmental than supranational characters – allowing States to take sovereign decisions on those matters – and that the political dependency from the North Atlantic Treaty still flourishes.

Speaking of the defense policy, it is worth mentioning the Petersberg Declaration of June 1992 which, together with the UN resolution of the same year, legitimized the use of force during peacekeeping missions and crisis management situations. After the approval of the Petersberg Declaration, the period of interventionism in the context of Slavic wars started; armies of France, Germany and UK, together with other NATO Members and UNPROFOR, began to operate in the zone through peacekeeping and peacemaking operations.

In order to better understand the purposes of the European defense policy, it is worth recalling the Section I paragraph 3 of the Petersberg Declaration, which states:

« Ministers welcomed the decisions taken by the CSCE Council in Berlin and Prague regarding the relationships between the CSCE and other mutually reinforcing European and transatlantic organizations including WEU. They declared that WEU, together with

¹⁰ European Union, *Treaty on European Union*, Official Journal of the European Communities, Maastricht 1992, Title V, Art. J.3, J.4, J.7, pp.96-99.

Accessed at: < https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2002/4/9/2c2f2b85-14bb-4488-9ded-13f3cd04de05/publishable_en.pdf > (September 2021)

the European Union, was ready to play a full part in building up Europe's security architecture. They likewise reaffirmed their conviction that the Atlantic Alliance is one of the indispensable foundations of Europe's security. They welcomed the ongoing reform process of NATO with a view to establishing a strong new transatlantic partnership.¹¹ »

Building up an European Security architecture, in alignment with NATO security apparatus, meant that all humanitarian and rescue tasks would have been carried out through military action, either defensive or offensive; it seemed thus not possible to separate humanitarian aid from the field of security.

In this regard, it seems particularly important to mention the paragraph 18 Section I of the Petersberg Declaration:

« Ministers reaffirmed the importance of the Mediterranean Sub-Group's work on security in the Mediterranean. They adopted terms of reference for the establishment by WEU of a gradual and phased dialogue with the Maghreb countries, taking into account the political developments both in these countries and in the region.¹² »

Even in this case, although the article leaves reveal the intention of promoting dialogue and integration between European and Maghreb countries, the improvement of security in the Mediterranean area is underlined, suggesting the importance for the WEU to defend itself against terrorism, migration flows and in general “invasions” of any-kind. Nevertheless, the last line of the paragraph, asserts the importance of taking into account the political developments in the countries of the Mediterranean region, by implying the possible formation of channels of political cooperation.

The Amsterdam Treaty of 1997, amended the Maastricht Treaty introducing changes, especially in the area of Common Foreign and Security Policy; the provisions of the Petersberg Declaration regarding peacekeeping operations and humanitarian tasks were included into the new Treaty, while the dimension of the security and defense policy

¹¹ Western European Union, Council of Ministers, *Petersberg Declaration*, Bonn, 19th June 1992, Section I paragraph 3.

Accessed at: < https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/1999/1/1/16938094-bb79-41ff-951c-f6c7aae8a97a/publishable_en.pdf > (September 2021)

¹² Western European Union, Council of Ministers, *Petersberg Declaration made by the WEU Council of Ministers*, Bonn, 19th June 1992, Section I paragraph 18.

Accessed at: < https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/1999/1/1/16938094-bb79-41ff-951c-f6c7aae8a97a/publishable_en.pdf > (September 2021)

was added to the “second pillar” of the CFSP, also introducing the “common strategy” as a new foreign policy instrument.

Furthermore, the Amsterdam Treaty introduced the position of High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy who was also the Secretary-General of the Council; the Spanish Javier Solana remained in office from 1999 to 2009 and his responsibility was to represent the CFSP of the EU and to support the members of the Council in their contacts with third countries.

Subsequently, there was a Franco-British Summit in St Malo in 1998; Great Britain changed position with regards to the promotion of European defense integration, abandoning the idea of dependence on NATO and embracing that of building an European defense apparatus.

In fact, with the Nice Treaty of 2000, the provisions included in the Amsterdam Treaty regarding security and defense were converted into an independent policy, the so-called “European Security and Defense Policy” (ESDP). Furthermore, after the events of 11th September 2001, EU Members States recognized the necessity to develop a joint strategy with regards to common threats – e.g. terrorism – and in 2003 the European security strategy (ESS) has been adopted.

Finally, the Treaty of Lisbon (ToL) of 2009 established the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) as a new EU institution that, bringing together diplomats, officials from the Council Secretariat and Commissioners engaged in external affairs, might suggests that supranationalism has been applied in the field of CFSP. In reality, the Commission has only a non-exclusive right of initiative in matters of foreign policy, the European Parliament can only provide running commentary and the European Court of Justice remains excluded from CFSP; even if the EEAS embodies different visions and institutions of the EU and the High Representative has been separated from the structure of the General Secretariat of the Council, the intergovernmental approach remains embedded in the field of the EU foreign policy, prioritizing the EU Council as the chief of the CFSP¹³.

¹³ H. Wallace *et al.*, *Policy-making in the European Union*, Eight edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2020, pp. 394-399.

1.2. The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP)

In order to respond to the 2004 EU enlargement, when 10 countries, mainly of the former Soviet Bloc, joined the European Union, the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) has been launched and finally adopted with the objective of avoiding the creation of new borders between the enlarged EU and its neighborhood countries.

In 2003, the European Commission informed the Council with a communication entitled “*The Wider Europe Neighborhood, a New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbors*”, where it announced to unify EU’s policies and objectives towards its neighboring countries with the aim of creating “a ring of friendly countries” around the EU so as to create stability on the Community borders.

The Commission’s proposal was then analyzed by the Council and, in 2004, the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) was adopted and ready for the implementation phase within the decision-making process.

The program was initially conceived for the Eastern European Neighborhood, but it was then extended to 10 Southern Mediterranean countries; the ENP currently deals with the relations with 16 countries. To the East: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and to the South: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia.

To better explain the objectives of the European Neighborhood Policy, it seems reasonable to identify the four components of this program: firstly, the ENP fits into the context of the Foreign and Security Policy with the aim of maintaining stability, security and welfare on the EU’s Southern and Eastern borders. In the previously mentioned European Security Strategy (ESS), the EU asserts that « It is in the European interest that countries on our borders are well-governed. Neighbors who are engaged in violent conflict, weak States where organized crime flourishes, dysfunctional societies or exploding population growth on its borders all pose problems for Europe.¹⁴ »

¹⁴J. Solana – EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *A Secure Europe in a Better World*, European Council, Thessaloniki, 20th June 2003, p. 7.

Accessed at:

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/reports/76255.pdf >

(October 2021)

This statement suggests that there is a strong commitment, on the part of the EU, to defend Community borders against “common threats” such as international terrorism or illegal migration, in order to avoid concerns which could undermine EU interests and stability.

The second component of the ENP is related to the EU promotion of democracy, rule of law and the respect for human rights, by strengthening the involvement of the civil society, and fostering both the good governance and the economic development of East and Mediterranean neighbors, so as to create a “ring of well governed states”¹⁵.

The pre-accession strategy constitutes the third component of the European Neighborhood Policy; it was conceived for the Eastern neighbors which would have been candidates for joining the EU, but did not yet possess the criteria for obtaining the *acquis communautaire*, that is to say the set of rights, legal obligations and political objectives that unite and bind the member states of the European Union.

Here, the enlargement policy is designed around a logic of paternalism between the EU and candidate countries, in order to accompany them towards the acquisition of the criteria to access the Community¹⁶.

The last objective of the European Neighborhood Policy can be identified as the orientation, by the EU, towards the expansion of trade and economic relations with neighboring countries; the ultimate goal of creating a free trade area (FTA), where customs duties are progressively eliminated and there are no barriers to trade.

1.2.1. The 2011 ENP review

The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) was reviewed in 2011, after the “Arab Spring” uprisings – to be discussed below – symbol of the fact that the initial approach of the EU towards neighboring countries did not produced the desired results and may even have worsened the economic and political situations in some of those States – i.e.

¹⁵ J. Solana (EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy), *A Secure Europe in a Better World*, European Council, Thessaloniki, 20th June 2003, p. 8.

Accessed at:

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/reports/76255.pdf >

(October 2021)

¹⁶ B. Lippert, *The EU neighbourhood policy: Profile, potential, perspective*, Intereconomics, Springer, Heidelberg 2007, pp. 180-187.

through “forced” trade liberalization, and good relations between the EU and some renowned dictators.

The Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, published on 25 May 2011¹⁷, highlights some of the weaknesses of the ENP up to that time, and describes the features of the new approach towards Eastern and Southern neighbors: the first recommendation is to provide greater support to the building of the so-called ‘deep democracies’, characterized by a higher level of pluralism in a non-corrupt civil society, by freedom of speech and other civil and human rights that many Europeans take for granted.

Secondly, the EU is committed to support inclusive economic development in neighboring countries so as to allow them to trade, invest and grow in a sustainable way, by creating new jobs for their workers and hence reducing social and regional inequalities.

It is also stressed, as a third objective, the necessity to enhance and distinguish the two dimensions of the ENP, namely the Eastern Partnership and the Southern Mediterranean, in such a way that regional initiatives could be better outlined looking at the various cultural specificities of neighboring countries.

As final point, the EU affirms the importance of providing appropriate mechanisms and instruments to achieve the goals previously mentioned. Among the most used mechanisms, ENP Action Plans are the common ones: the Joint Communication of 2011 underlines the necessity to delineate a clearer sequencing of actions and to include more precise benchmarks which focus on short and medium-term priorities, in order to promote more specific measures.

From a financing perspective, the European Neighborhood Partnership Instrument (ENPI) would have been enriched of additional resources provided through reallocations within the heading 4 – “the EU as a global player” – of the multiannual financial framework 2007-2013. Moreover, according to EU, the involvement of the

¹⁷ European Commission, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, A new response to a changing neighborhood*, Brussels, 25th May 2011.

Accessed at: <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0303:FIN:en:PDF>> (October 2021)

European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), together with other international finance institutions, would have been decisive for securing additional loan facilities to Eastern and Southern neighboring countries¹⁸.

As the political scientist Agnieszka K. Cianciara pointed out in the article dated back to 2016, *Stability, security, democracy: explaining shifts in the narrative of the European Neighbourhood Policy*¹⁹, the analysis of the ENP review of 2011 shows that this kind of program could be considered as a narrative tool that the European Union has used to legitimize, both externally and internally, its actions; a narrative tool may be defined as an instrument that political decision-makers use to « construct a shared meaning of the past, present and future [...] to achieve political objectives²⁰. » As soon as the European Union is facing several crisis, both financial and institutional, undergoing external threats, it uses its foreign policy to regain legitimacy and credibility.

1.2.2. *The 2015 ENP review*

In 2015, the European Neighborhood Policy has been reformulated, reflecting a more realistic and pragmatic approach; the stabilization of common borders became a high priority, while it was emphasized the need for “differentiation” depending on the ambitions of countries, acknowledging that not all neighboring States would have aimed to become liberal democracies.

In this regard, it appears appropriate to analyze some aspects of the 2015 ENP review, the *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions*, in which some priority areas of action of the ENP are deepened.

The objective of the 2015 ENP review was the stabilization of the European neighborhood, considered as the most urgent challenge of the period 2016-2020 towards Eastern and Southern neighboring countries.

¹⁸ *ivi*, pp. 2-21.

¹⁹ A. K. Cianciara, *Stability, security, democracy: explaining shifts in the narrative of the European Neighborhood Policy*, Taylor & Francis Online, 10th November 2016, pp. 49-62.

Accessed at: <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07036337.2016.1256397>> (October 2021)

²⁰ *ibid*.

In order to achieve the priority of stabilizing those areas, according to EU institutions, some measures had to be implemented; first of all the necessity to build stronger partnerships, in the form of bilateral agreements, to accomplish both political association and economic integration.

As an example, the EU has concluded new generation Association Agreements/Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (AA/DCFTA) with Georgia, Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine, while it maintains privileged relations with Morocco and Tunisia.

In this regard, within the review it is underlined that the roles of both the Council and the Member States are considered important to identify priorities and support their implementation; it might thus be inferred that within the Council, in the field of foreign policy, some “special interest relationships” between Member States and some neighboring countries may prevail, thus leading to the consolidation of intergovernmental approaches and international relations, rather than supranational ones.

The second aspect to be considered important for the achievement of stabilization in the neighborhood is once again, according to EU institutions, the promotion of good governance, democracy, rule of law and human rights. Even if, as already mentioned, the encouragement of deep-democratic processes was not on the top of the agenda for the period 2016-2020, the Joint Communication highlights that the EU should promote universal values through the European Neighborhood Policy. This latter concept will be extensively analyzed in the following chapters, being the most criticized notion by post-development theorists.

The EU support to neighboring countries on the issue of good governance should be translated, from the EU point of view, into public administration reforms, effective anti-corruption measures, (re)privatizations and reform of State-owned/controlled companies where corruption is high²¹. The latter measure may be inserted within the context of GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services), international treaty which aims to

²¹European Commission, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions, Review of the European Neighborhood Policy*, Brussels, 18th November 2015, pp.3-6.

Accessed at: <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2019-01/151118_joint-communication_review-of-the-enp_en.pdf> (October 2021)

liberalize the trade in services in the context of a market-oriented economy. Given that the objective of the ENP is compatible with the logic of GATS, it appears thus normal that the EU pushes for privatization of companies.

Moreover, within the ENP review of 2015, the concept of stabilization seems to coincide with the ideas of economic development and modernization also aimed at maintaining the international economic balance. The reinforcement of the fiscal stability, the support to structural reforms, according to what the European Union asserts, are intended to improve competitiveness, inclusive growth and social development in the neighboring countries.

The EU also underlines²² the importance of cooperating with International Financial Institutions (IFIs), such as the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). These institutions provide funds to State in trouble with foreign debt in return for the implementation of structural reforms – i.e. the reduction of public spending, or the privatization of state-owned enterprises – which, according to the EU, should improve living conditions for citizens, promoting thus inclusive growth.

Another component which, from a European perspective, would increase the level of stabilization of neighboring countries is the security dimension, tackling terrorism and radicalization through crisis management and reform of civilian and military security; the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) of the EU, across its missions and operations, has to deal with border protection and the resolution of conflicts in the neighborhood²³.

Finally, in the field of migration, the regional dimension, is considered important in order to ensure that neighboring countries of the same macro-regions can work in close partnership between them²⁴ – e.g. regional dialogues such as Rabat and Khartoum processes in the South and the Budapest and Prague processes in the East.

Through the EU Agencies, such as FRONTEX and EUROPOL, the European Union commits itself to combat illegal migration and to deal with the border management, keeping migration pressures under control while, in the field of legal migration, the

²² *ivi*, p. 7.

²³ *ivi*, p. 14.

²⁴ *ivi*, pp. 15-18.

purpose of the EU would be, at least in theory, to promote people's mobility through visa facilitations for entering the Community²⁵.

A not insignificant detail, though, regards the actual management, by the EU and its Member States, of migration flows; referring to FRONTEX, it's worth recalling that, from its institution in 2016, there is a stable collaboration between institutions and national governments in the field of patrol missions of maritime and land borders; during 2021, it has also become the first European agency to have its own uniform, showing how, in the field of military security, the EU can implement a concerted approach where there is a stable collaboration between Community institutions and national governments. Moreover, the newspaper *Politico* has recently conducted a survey on the non-recruitment, by FRONTEX, of 40 human rights specialists to oversee the agency activities, having been accused of irregularities and malpractice in different parts of Europe.²⁶

Instead, as regards the objective of ensuring legal channels to migration flows – e.g. visa facilitations – it is important to underline how, in this respect, the power of action is in the hands of Member States which, with a few exceptions, do not seem willing to adopt more inclusive parameters, sometimes even preferring bilateral agreements with third countries concerned by migration flows; it seems sufficient to look at the Memorandum Italy-Libya of 2017²⁷.

Despite the fact that the European foreign policy, including the European Neighborhood Policy, is permeated by an almost exclusive intergovernmental approach, where, as seen, the decision-making power resides in the Council, hence in national governments of Member States, the EU institutions continue to believe in the ENP, outlining more and more general objectives, in the field of Eastern and Southern neighborhood cooperation, to be achieved within the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) of the Community.

²⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶ H. Von Der Burchard, *Frontex neglected evidence of potential migrant pushbacks, says Parliament report*, *Politico*, 14th July 2021.

Accessed at: <<https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-migration-frontex-pushbacks-illegal-parliament-report/>> (October 2021)

²⁷ Governo della Repubblica Italiana, Governo di Riconciliazione Nazionale dello Stato di Libia, *Memorandum d'intesa sulla cooperazione nel campo dello sviluppo, del contrasto all'immigrazione illegale, al traffico di esseri umani, al contrabbando e sul rafforzamento della sicurezza delle frontiere tra lo Stato della Libia e la Repubblica Italiana*, Roma, 2nd February 2017.

Accessed at: <<https://www.governo.it/sites/governo.it/files/Libia.pdf>> (October 2021)

1.2.3. Future development of the ENP

On 18th March 2020, The Joint Communication on the *Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020 – Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all*²⁸ has been adopted with the objective of addressing common challenges and setting out a closer connection with Eastern neighborhood partners in order to foster sustainable development, strengthen resilience and deliver concrete benefits to people. The goals of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) are in line with those set out in the ENP review of 2015, with the addition of some other objectives related to sustainability – e.g. the fostering of the circular economy.

Regarding instead the Southern neighborhood partnership, on 9th February 2021, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy published a Joint Communication on a *Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighborhood – A new Agenda for the Mediterranean*²⁹ – reconfirming the objectives outlined since the 1995 Barcelona Process, and setting up new goals and priorities arisen due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which have deeply impacted economies and whole societies. The official document relating to the renewed partnership with the Mediterranean, will be examined in depth in the next paragraph that will be focused on the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, an area of the ENP.

On a more general note, the European Neighborhood Policy is funded by the ENI (European Neighborhood Instrument), which has allocated EUR 15.4 billion for the period 2014-2020). In the context of the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework,

²⁸ European Commission, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions, Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020 Reinforcing Resilience - an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all*, Brussels, 18th March 2020.

Accessed at: <https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/1_en_act_part1_v6.pdf> (October 2021)

²⁹ European Commission, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions, Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighborhood, A new Agenda for the Mediterranean*, Brussels, 9th February 2021.

Accessed at:

<https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/joint_communication_renewed_partnership_southern_neighbourhood.pdf> (October 2021)

the EU adopted, on 11th June 2021, the Regulation (EU) 2021/947³⁰ on the establishment of the Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI – Global Europe, the MFF 2021-2027 provides funds amounting to EUR 79.462 billion under NDICI).

This new instrument consists of 3 pillars: a geographic pillar (EUR 60.388), which is concerned with cooperation in four geographical areas: the Neighborhood, the Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Pacific, America and the Caribbean. The second pillar (EUR 6.358 billion) regards the thematic approach covering the support for human rights and democracy, civil society organizations, peace, stability and conflict prevention, including other global challenges.

The rapid response pillar is the last one and deals with crisis management, resilience of States and societies, linking humanitarian aid and development action; it holds EUR 3.182 billion of funds.

The ENI funding is used, for the vast majority, for bilateral ENP Action Plans (AP), soft law mechanisms of regulation – they are not binding and contain general guidelines – mutually agreed by the EU and each partner country. European Neighborhood Instrument funds are also accessible for regional cooperation (South-to-South) and Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC), between EU and several neighboring countries.

1.3. Focusing on the Southern Neighborhood: from the Barcelona Process to “A new Agenda for the Mediterranean”

1.3.1. The Barcelona Process

The Barcelona Conference of 1995, held on 27th and 29th November 1995, had set, as a fundamental objective, the achievement of peace and stability in the Mediterranean area, operating on three different levels: political, economic-financial and socio-cultural-human.

³⁰ European Parliament and Council of the European Union, *Regulation (EU) 2021/947 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe, amending and repealing Decision No 466/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009*, Official Journal of the European Union, Brussels, 9th June 2021. Accessed at: <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/947/oj>> (October 2021)

The process of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation promoted by the Barcelona Conference was intended, at least in appearance, to go beyond and “overtake” the paternalistic concept of assistance to developing countries – colonial and neo-colonial thinking – by embracing instead the optic of mutual partnership on a more equal basis.

In this respect, it appears appropriate to sort through the main features of the so called Barcelona Process, in order to begin to understand whether the measures adopted by the EU in this context are consistent with the perspective of building equitable relations between the European Union, North African and Middle-East countries.

A first characteristic of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership is the multilateral political dialogue which should be at the basis of those relations; according to the EU, such dialogue needs to focus on the acquisition, by the neighboring countries, of certain criteria – *acquis communautaire* – that can bring them closer to the EU, implementing political reforms and ensuring respect for human rights and freedom of expression, but also supporting economic and political reform in order to stimulate growth, improve living standards and create jobs.

One of the goals of the Barcelona Process is, in fact, to create a Free Trade Area (FTA), building an economic and financial partnership between the two coasts of the Mediterranean through the creation of a zone of prosperity shared by the two sides, by progressively eliminating barriers to trade, liberalizing it³¹.

Unlike other Free Trade Areas established in other parts of the world, where two or more countries shall seek agreement for removing trade barriers, in such case there is an asymmetrical situation – unequal exchange treated in the first paragraph – meaning that the economies of the two parts of the agreement have two different levels of economic integration and development. Furthermore, the EU is a single and united entity, while the other countries are a group of heterogeneous States with different political, economic and social situations. North Africa and Middle-East countries are then characterized by heavy leakages of financial flows and investments and, being low-productive, they are considered as net importers of foreign good – i.e. countries characterized by import flows which do not correspond to export flows of at least equal

³¹ M. Hahn, *The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, The Barcelona Process since 1995*, Diplomica Verlag GmbH, Hamburg 2009, pp. 14-36.

value³². It seems thus that the creation of a Free Trade Area may not be convenient to North Africa and Middle-East countries as it is to the European Union.

Nevertheless, being the Barcelona Declaration a merely general reference framework and not a binding document, it has become necessary, for the implementation of the objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, the conclusion of bilateral agreements between the European Union and each third country involved, the so-called association agreements, which aim at building cooperation in the economic and commercial fields; these treaties constitute the first stage that non-EU countries must carry out before entering the Community.

To date, the Association Agreements with Southern partners have been stipulated with Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Palestinian Authority. Syria and Libya, due to political instability and to civil wars, do not participate in the Association Agreements, but the EU is engaged, by the mediation of the United Nations, in a dialogue with those countries, providing funds through the European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI) and trying to support peace processes in both States.

Taking into consideration, as an example, the Association Agreement between the EU and Tunisia³³, it is observed that it sets out the various areas where it shall operate, starting from the political dialogue – Title I³⁴ – in order to guarantee prosperity, stability and security in the Mediterranean region. The Title II³⁵ regards the free circulation of goods in compliance with the GATT/WTO system of rules, by regulating first the exchange of industrial products, then disciplining trade in agricultural and fisheries products, and finally the common provisions regarding quantitative restrictions or measures having an equivalent effect.

³² G. Giovannetti, E. Marvasi, *Trade Networks in the MENA Region*, IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2019, IEMed European Institute of the Mediterranean.

Accessed at: <<https://www.iemed.org/publication/trade-networks-in-the-mena-region/>> (October 2021)

³³The European Community, the Republic of Tunisia, *Euro-Mediterranean agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Tunisia, of the other part*, Official Journal of the European Communities, 3rd March 1998.

Accessed at: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:21998A0330\(01\)&from=EN#d1e150-2-1](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:21998A0330(01)&from=EN#d1e150-2-1) (October 2021)

³⁴ *ivi*, pp. 2-3.

³⁵ *ivi*, pp. 3-7.

The Title III³⁶ of the Euro-Tunisian Association Agreement is concerned with the liberalization of trade in services – in accordance with GATS – and the right of establishment concerning the possibility for the companies to locate themselves on either side of the territory – both in EU and in Tunisia. However, there is no mention, within the agreement, of the citizens' freedom of movement which is normally recognized as one of the four fundamental freedom of the common market.

Then, Title IV³⁷ deals with capital movement and competitiveness, while Title V³⁸ concerns the economic cooperation between EU and Tunisia, although with a perspective of assistance towards Tunisia. In fact, Article 42 states: « The objective of economic cooperation shall be to support Tunisia's own efforts to achieve sustainable economic and social development » while Article 44 claims that the economic cooperation shall involve methods such as « assistance with technical, administrative and regulatory matters. »

Lastly, Title VI³⁹ deals with cooperation in social and cultural matters – i.e. non-discrimination of Tunisian workers established, for business purposes, in a EU Member State – while Title VII⁴⁰ regulates the field of financial cooperation with the aim of modernizing the Tunisian economy, through reforms such as MEDA programs (*Mesures d'Adjustement*), the main financial instrument used by the EU in the framework of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.

The Association Agreement between the European Union and Tunisia has been taken here into consideration as a model to explain the characteristics of these treaties, since the other agreements with North African and Middle-Eastern countries have almost the same structure and content.

To conclude, one last important feature of the Barcelona Process appears to be the greater involvement of the civil society, through an approach of decentralized cooperation in which protagonists are non-State actors (both local and international), who try to foster understanding among peoples and their rapprochement (cooperation people-to-people).

³⁶ *ivi*, p. 8.

³⁷ *ivi*, pp. 9-11.

³⁸ *ivi*, pp. 11-14.

³⁹ *ivi*, pp. 15-16.

⁴⁰ *ivi*, p. 17.

1.3.2. Brief analysis of the Arab Spring: comparison with the current situation in some MENA countries

With the definition “Arab Spring”, it is usual to refer to a series of uprisings and upheavals that occurred in North Africa and Middle-East during 2010 and 2011 to struggle against dictatorships, but also against economic and social crises.

There are several causes which have led to mass uprising: first of all the “demographic time bomb” that was happening in those territories; the population of Arab countries more than doubled, between 1975 and 2005, to 314 million, resulting in a demographic transition – in Egypt, two third of the population is now under 30.

In a globalized world, within the social context, the younger generation, largely schooled, with broader perspectives for a fair future – in comparison with older population which, in those territories, seems less concerned with changing the system – used the power of internet and media communication, escaped from regimes control, to spread the social, economic and political unrest in which Arab peoples lived.

The increase in schooling, during those years, has resulted in a growth of human capital, which in turn promotes the development of personal, social and economic welfare; in fact, a close link between growth in education and demand for freedom has been established⁴¹.

Beyond that, there is no denying that the excessive economic opening, imposed by the European Union and other international institutions, plugged into a constant closed-door policy, resulted into a social-economic crisis where the trade liberalization was increasing the unemployment and the political regimes seemed determined to not question a different distribution of wealth – patronage schemes and caste-distinctions in society.

⁴¹ C. Douglas et al., *The Arab Uprisings: Causes, Consequences and Perspectives, An Extended Summary of a Panel Discussion with Rami Khouri*, ICAT Working Paper Series, Kennesaw State University, March 2014.

Accessed at: <https://icat.kennesaw.edu/docs/pubs/RK_Final_Paper.pdf> (October 2021)

Actually, in 2010, the North African Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased by 5%⁴², but income distribution was unequal in those countries, leaving popular classes in poverty and young people unemployed and hence generating enormous social tensions. In this regard, another cause for the unleashing of uprisings was the increase in food and agricultural prices – basic commodities – result of the demographic boom which caused an increase in demand that exceeded the supply of those goods hence giving rise to unsuspected inflationist tendencies thus leaving the population in turmoil.

A final reason that brought to the Arab Spring uprisings is attributable to other local fractures that influenced the social discontent of each country involved, i.e. those between center and periphery in Libya, religious tensions in Syria, high levels of corruption in Tunisia⁴³.

The Arab Spring began precisely in Tunisia when, on 7 December 2010, the street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in protest against the constant harassment by the Tunisian police. The episode caused several public demonstrations against the despotism and the corruption of the Ben Ali regime, in power since 1987; protesters demanded the democratization of the political system and they also denounced the Tunisian economic crisis. On 14 January 2011, the regime collapsed and Ben Ali escaped in Saudi Arabia with his family, while, in March 2011, a delicate process of democratization was opening up. The first democratic elections of 23 October 2011 recorded a large turnout: 90% of voters went to the polls, sanctioning the success of Ennahda, a moderated Islamist movement. Election Observation Missions of the EU were sent to oversee the proper conduct of the Tunisian elections and to assist the democratization process in that area⁴⁴.

The Tunisian case is emblematic since it is the only country that, after the Arab Spring, has managed to initiate a democratization process of the political system even if, due to

⁴² Camera dei deputati - Servizio Studi - Dipartimento affari esteri, *Approfondimenti sulla crisi politica in Nord Africa e Medio Oriente - MENA (Medio Oriente e Nord Africa): quadro economico e sviluppo umano*, n. 220/3, 13th April 2011.

Accessed at: <<http://documenti.camera.it/leg16/dossier/Testi/es0722c.htm>> (October 2021)

⁴³ C. Douglas et al., *The Arab Uprisings: Causes, Consequences and Perspectives, An Extended Summary of a Panel Discussion with Rami Khouri*, ICAT Working Paper Series, Kennesaw State University, March 2014.

Accessed at: <https://icat.kennesaw.edu/docs/pubs/RK_Final_Paper.pdf> (October 2021)

⁴⁴ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, *Jasmine Revolution, Tunisian history*, Encyclopedia Britannica, last updated: 10th December 2021.

Accessed at: <<https://www.britannica.com/event/Jasmine-Revolution>> (October 2021)

the endemic corruption and authoritarianism which characterize almost all North African and Middle-East countries, the path to democracy is far from being materialized.

In fact, when looking at the current situation in Tunisia, the head of state Kais Saied, elected in 2019, carried out a *coup d'état* on the 25th July 2021, invoking Article 80 of the Constitution, removing the Prime Minister from office and temporarily suspending the parliament, taking upon himself the executive authority⁴⁵. Moreover, despite the dramatic socio-economic situation which characterizes the country, Kais Saied has not yet outlined a recovery plan that may give hope to the Tunisian people; meanwhile, other insurrections have occurred during the period 2019-2021.

For what concerns Libya, on February 2011, popular uprisings, that soon became armed insurrections with the intervention of army officers, had erupted against the authoritarian regime of Mu‘ Ammar Gheddafi. On the 27th February 2011, the National Transition Council (TNC) was founded and it self-proclaimed, with the support of France and NATO, the only legitimate representative of Libya. Gheddafi was captured by the rebels on the 20th October in Sirte⁴⁶.

Despite the end of the Gheddafi regime, Libya, in recent years, is a country without a State at the mercy of political tribes and factions supported by European powers for the defense of their particular interests in that territory. Libyan future presidential elections had been scheduled to be held on the 24th December 2021, but they have been postponed, by the High National Elections Commission, to date to be determined due to the unsuitability in electoral legislation and issues concerning candidates' eligibility⁴⁷.

In fact, among the original candidates, some names stand out: Saif al-Islam Gheddafi, second son of the colonel Gheddafi, whose candidature has been rejected since he is still wanted on war crimes at an international court; Khalifa Belqasim Haftar, supported by

⁴⁵ The Editors of ISPI Online Publications, *Tunisia: democrazia sospesa*, Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale (ISPI), 26th July 2021.

Accessed at: <<https://www.ispionline.it/it>> (October 2021)

⁴⁶ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, *Libya Revolt of 2011*, Encyclopedia Britannica, last updated: 5th February 2020.

Accessed at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Libya-Revolt-of-2011/additional-info#history> (October 2021)

⁴⁷ The Editors of Aljazeera, *Libyan parliament refuses to fix date for delayed elections*, Aljazeera, 27th December 2021.

Accessed at: <<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/12/27/libya-parliament-committee-elections-date>> (February 2022)

France, one of the military commanders of the Gheddafi regime, over whom hangs a recent arrest warrant, and two other candidates, Ahmed Maetig and Fathi Bashagha, elected ministers in the past under questionable circumstances⁴⁸.

Egypt was also a protagonist of the Arab Spring, since the popular uprisings occurring during 2011 led to the resignation – 11 February – of Hosni Mubarak in power for 30 years; the leadership of the country was left in the hands of armed forces, in close contact with Muslim Brotherhood, and soon interreligious tensions began. Mubarak was accused of the death of 800 protesters⁴⁹.

Nevertheless, Egypt has certainly not initiated a democratization process; the current president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, in office since 2014, has implemented an almost total control of the society, by repressing any criticism to the regime and violating human rights through abuses and tortures. Furthermore, the government invests the majority of the public spending on huge infrastructural projects in whom societies owned by the army – which enjoy tax benefits – are involved.

Moreover, Egypt has received, in June 2020, a loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) amounting to \$5.2 billion, which prompted the government to reduce public spending and to devalue the national currency; in 2020 a positive growth rate has been registered (3,6%), but a third of more than 100 million of Egyptians lives below the poverty line⁵⁰.

The last emblematic case which seems important to mention is the Syrian civil war; the symbolic beginning of the popular uprisings dates back to the 15th May 2011, when people took to the streets to protest against the regime of Bashar al-Assad, in office since 2000.

The Syrian civil war is still continuing and caused, hitherto, more than 400 thousand deaths, forcing over 12 million people to leave their habitations – half of these has fled

⁴⁸ P. Laurenza, Libia, *elezioni presidenziali: la lista dei candidati sale a quota 16*, Luiss, Osservatorio sulla Sicurezza Internazionale, 18th November 2021.
Accessed at: <<https://sicurezzainternazionale.luiss.it/2021/11/18/libia-elezioni-presidenziali-la-lista-dei-candidati-sale-quota-16/>> (November 2021)

⁴⁹ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, *Egypt Uprising of 2011*, Encyclopedia Britannica, last updated: 2nd May 2018.

Accessed at: <<https://www.britannica.com/event/Egypt-Uprising-of-2011>> (November 2021)

⁵⁰ Cairo AFP, *Egypt's GDP grows despite pandemic, but so does poverty*, France24, 8th November 2020.
Accessed at: <<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20201108-egypt-s-gdp-grows-despite-pandemic-but-so-does-poverty>> (November 2021)

the country. Moreover, the overwhelming socio-economic crisis is hitting, to a dramatic extent, children; Unicef warns that nearly 90% of minors of the country needs humanitarian assistance⁵¹.

However, taking into consideration the current situation in the MENA region, it is possible to speak of a “Second Arab Spring” or better “Arab Summer” since, between 2018 and 2021, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Sudan, Algeria, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Gaza Strip, have been the scene of further protests against the various regimes that have been mentioned, but also against the socio-economic crises that continue to worsen the situation of these countries.

1.3.3. *New strategy of the EU towards North Africa and Middle-East*

The program of the European Union towards North African and Middle-Eastern countries has been recently reviewed and, on the 9th February 2021, a Joint Communication has been presented for a *Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighborhood - A new Agenda for the Mediterranean*⁵²; the Council, on April 2021, has approved the conclusions on this strategy towards MENA region.

As previously explained, the EU Parliament and the Council reached an agreement on 2020 for the establishment of the new Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) that will be also used in the framework of the Southern EU Neighborhood for the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027, with an endowment of 80 billion euro.

According to leaders, this instrument will enable the EU to be more reactive in its foreign policy, giving it the necessary instruments to achieve its political and strategy objectives through international cooperation and to compete with the other world powers.

⁵¹ Human Rights, *Syria: 10 years of war has left at least 350,000 dead*, United Nations, UN News, Global perspectives Human stories, 24th September 2021.

Accessed at: <<https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/09/1101162>> (November 2021)

⁵² European Commission and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighborhood – A new Agenda for the Mediterranean*, Brussels, 9th February 2021.

Accessed at:

https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/joint_communication_renewed_partnership_southern_neighborhood.pdf (November 2021).

With the adoption of the Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), the EU has also reached an important goal: the EU Parliament will become a little more relevant subject in the field of foreign policy since the NDICI, being inserted within MFF, shall be subject to its control before being approved.

In addition to highlighting the importance of using the NDICI, the Joint Communication for the New Agenda for the Mediterranean also outlines the main objectives of the European Neighborhood Policy towards MENA region: the most important remark concerns the need to strengthen the partnership in order to tackle together the common challenges. The key component of the Agenda is an economic investment plan of EUR 7 billion to demobilize a total of EUR 30 billion thanks to the inclusion of both private and public investments; these funds shall be used to promote the socio-economic recovery in the Mediterranean region.

The five pillars, upon which the funding will be based, shall be the same outlined in the previous reviews of the ENP, with the addition of green transition and climate resilience. The areas of intervention described by the Commission seems to reflect the priorities that most characterize the Ursula von der Leyen Presidency – i.e. Green Deal.

However, two critical points continue to persist: concerning migration, in fact, the strategy of the Commission does not seem to place itself in discontinuity from the past.

The new Agenda for the Mediterranean, from the point of view of migration, builds on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum⁵³, where the migration issue is addressed with the same ‘old’ securitarian approach. In both documents no mention is made to sea rescues and few details are reserved to legal ways of entering the European Union – i.e. visa facilitations.

For what concerns the area of human rights, the EU institutions reaffirm their commitment to guarantee the respect for the rule of law and democratic values, without however specifying the modalities. This lack of determination would be attributable to divergences between Member States often determined to defend their particular geopolitical interests (i.e. Italy and France in Libya or Egypt). Herein lies the traditional contention between the EU Parliament and the Council; the former holds firm positions on European values, being the only supranational institution of the EU, while the latter

⁵³ European Commission, *New Pact on Migration and Asylum*, September 2020.

Accessed at: <<https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/new-pact-on-migration-and-asylum-package.pdf>> (November 2021).

is imbued with intergovernmentalism where the rivalry between Member States shines through its views, leading the Commission to cut-price agreements⁵⁴.

It can therefore be deduced that, in the context of Euro-Mediterranean affairs, the Council has an overriding power of action where the positions of Member States manifest themselves in defense of particular political and economic interests that they want to maintain and control. During the current economic globalization, where State and non-State actors make every effort to strategically invest and to make profits, the EU foreign policy, in particular towards MENA region, has focused, by the hands of the Council, on the willingness to re-produce some of the – typically imperialist – past forms of dependency.

The failure to implement a supranational system of cooperation with third countries is also expressed in the lack of a real ‘partnership approach’ that may establish a more constructive dialogue between the parties, exchanging views, on subjects such as the respect for the fundamental rights or the improvement of human conditions.

The deep examination of the EU development concept will be the purpose of the following chapter, so as to better understand the tendency of the Union to deal with foreign policy.

⁵⁴F. Tosi, *L’Agenda per il Mediterraneo: nuove idee, vecchi schemi*, Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale (ISPI), 15th March 2021.
Accessed at: <<https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/lagenda-il-mediterraneo-dellue-nuove-idee-vecchi-schemi-29631>> (November 2021).

Chapter II

The Western conception of growth and progress

2.1. Capital-centric development

2.1.1. Political economy of industrialization and capital accumulation

An initial Marxian analysis of capitalist mode of production results here necessary in order to comprehend the mechanisms of production and reproduction of capital in a globalized economy. In doing so, both *Grundrisse* and *The Capital*, two works written by Karl Marx, will be mentioned here: the former is used in the present analysis to provide a first definition of *social individual* and its relationship with the surrounding environment, while the latter is being reported to supply a short examination on the main features of *capital accumulation*, and the constant pursuit of surplus value.

The seven manuscripts written by Marx in 1857-58, known as *Grundrisse*, represent the preliminary work for the manual titled *A Contribution to Critique of Political Economy*, published in 1859. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx provides a first definition of the *social individual*, a new anthropological type which has been decoupled from nature in order to gather in society; its individual capacities have been objectified into the machinery, so that its abilities become socially developed⁵⁵. This specific process of denaturalization, indeed, is seen as one of the schemes to individual liberation;

⁵⁵ D. Sacchetto, M. Tomba (edited by), *La lunga accumulazione originaria, Politica e lavoro nel mercato mondiale*, ombre corte, first edition, 2008, pp. 107-110.

becoming private owner represents therefore one of the possibilities of alternative development, which provides the foundation of the capitalist mode of production⁵⁶.

The substantial difference between the capitalist and non-capitalist modes of production relies on their economic purposes: the objective of this latter is the production of *use-values*, namely, the reproduction of the individual in the relationships with its community (Marx 1857-58, II, p.108)⁵⁷.

Instead, the purpose of the capitalist mode of production is the output of *value*, through the production of goods for exchanging; the substance that creates value is labor. According to the Marxian perspective, in a capitalist society, there is value only when there is exchange, hence the term ‘exchange value’, that is materialized labor-time⁵⁸.

Assuming that the essential goal of the capital is the *added value*, a part of the product of labor which is retained by the capitalist – in various forms – from the workers’ wages thereby creating the surplus labor (part of unpaid work), Marxian theory claims that the capital recurses to extra-economic violence, wage differentiation and labor intensity, in order to extract greater amounts of added value⁵⁹.

The foreign trade is one of the means for the capitalist to make super-profits; in so doing he seeks to extort surplus labor from low-wage countries, thus generating a transfer of added value from countries where the productive power of labor is inferior towards those in which the specific weight of work is higher.

Having reduced the price of labor power below its value, a situation of overexploitation of work has been generated in the so-called ‘dependent countries’, thus providing *absolute surplus value* to the capitalist through its direct intervention via falling wages, increases of the working day (or intensity) without overtime pay, decreases of contributions, and so forth⁶⁰.

Another way of extracting extra profit, *extraordinary surplus value*, is by competitiveness and technological innovation. Marx, in ‘The Capital’, points out that machines do not create value, instead they transfer value to the product through the

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ *ivi*, p. 111.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹ *ivi*, p. 114.

⁶⁰ A. Marsaglia, *Imperialismo : dalla teoria della dipendenza alla world-system analysis*, in *Historia Magistra: rivista di storia critica*, Franco Angeli, 2016, pp. 30-44

workforce employed to their functioning; the merchandise produced has therefore a social value significantly higher than its individual value (Marx, 1890 pp. 430-450)⁶¹.

The industrial sector which has first innovated the production can, through competitiveness mechanisms, sell assets for a price determined by their social value – or even below – obtaining a surplus value exceeding that ordinary, hence an extra profit (Marx, 1861-1863, p.336).

However, according to Marx, this is a temporary phenomenon, considering that the innovation expands then to other enterprises of the same industrial sector and, in so doing, prices fall thereby also decreasing the extra profit of the first company which introduced the innovation.

At this point, it is important for the capital to establish low-wages geographical areas where it can continue to use machinery that might have been obsolete abroad, so as to persist in extracting extraordinary surplus value from the production⁶².

Ruy Mauro Marini, one of the pioneer of the Dependency Theory⁶³, claimed that capitalism is a global, monopolized, hierarchical, and unequal system which produces and reproduces *development models* creating global centers of capital accumulation and dependent regions: the latter are embedded in a worldwide process of value transfer. Also according to Marini, while in ‘centers’ capital accumulation gravitates around *relative surplus value*, provided by the increased productivity, in the so-called “dependent regions” model of capitalist/imperialist accumulation rely on the overexploitation of labor, through the extraction of both *absolute and extraordinary surplus value*.

⁶¹ D. Sacchetto, M. Tomba (edited by), *La lunga accumulazione originaria, Politica e lavoro nel mercato mondiale*, ombre corte, 2008, p. 115.

⁶² C.E. Martins, *Il pensiero di Ruy Mauro Marini e la sua attualità per le scienze sociali*, Traduzioni marxiste, 19th October 2017.

Accessed at: <<https://traduzionimarxiste.wordpress.com/2017/10/19/il-pensiero-di-ruy-mauro-marini-e-la-sua-attualita-per-le-scienze-sociali/>> (November 2021).

⁶³ *Dependency Theory*: «According to dependency theory, underdevelopment is mainly caused by the peripheral position of affected countries in the world economy. Typically, ‘underdeveloped’ countries offer cheap labor and raw materials on the world market. These resources are sold to advanced economies, which have the means to transform them into finished goods. Underdeveloped countries end up purchasing the finished products at high prices, depleting the capital they might otherwise devote to upgrading their own productive capacity. The result is a vicious cycle that perpetuates the division of the world economy between a rich core and a poor periphery.»

Definition taken from Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed at:

<<https://www.britannica.com/topic/dependency-theory>> (November 2021).

During the 1990s, Marini turns his attention on capitalist globalization and analyzes two new forms designed to extract extraordinary surplus value: first, the monopoly of science and of labor intensive in the context of knowledge and, second, the decentralization of physical technologies, transferred from the periphery to the semi-periphery, looking for overexploitation of labor. The outcome is a global leveling of the technical composition of capital, through the reorganization of the international division of labor aimed at the creation of a new monopoly (Marini, 1992 and 1996)⁶⁴.

It can thus be deduced that the *primitive accumulation* (*ursprungliche Akkumulation*) should not be conceived as an original form (*anfangliche Akkumulation*), rather as an ever present modality of extortion of surplus value. The accumulation is not characteristic only of the historical moment when capitalism originated, rather it is constantly reproduced by the capitalist mode of production; when capital is in crisis or when its profit is not high, the *law of value* imposes its presence in the world market.

Thereby, the capitalist subsumption occurs when the working process changes by ceasing to produce use values for its own needs in order to start the production for the international market; for this reason, capitalism can no longer be analyzed only looking at countries where it is already developed.

The capitalist accumulation is thus the driving force for the building and the reorganization of the global market which, on the one hand, holds together the various forms of exploitation and, on the other hand, intertwines peoples in the network of the global market (Marx 1890, p. 825).⁶⁵

This Marxian analysis of capitalism is not only suitable for the first wave of industrialization during 1800s – when Karl Marx elaborated his works – rather adapted itself also to Fordist period, term coined in the 1930s – following the success obtained by Henry Ford in the automotive industry – to define the birth of a peculiar mode of production mainly based on the use of the technology of assembly-line, implemented to increase productivity.

⁶⁴ C.E. Martins, *Il pensiero di Ruy Mauro Marini e la sua attualità per le scienze sociali*, Traduzioni marxiste, 19th October 2017.

Accessed at: <<https://traduzionimarxiste.wordpress.com/2017/10/19/il-pensiero-di-ruy-mauro-marini-e-la-sua-attualita-per-le-scienze-sociali/>> (November 2021)

⁶⁵ D. Sacchetto, M. Tomba, *La lunga accumulazione originaria, Politica e lavoro nel mercato mondiale*, Ombre corte, Novembre 2008, pp. 106-121.

Fordism had a large following in the sector of manufacturing industry so as to significantly revolutionize the organization of production on a global scale and to become one of the cornerstones of the twentieth century economy, with considerable influences on society.

One of the two pillars of Fordism is the organizational model typical of Taylorism – with a special focus on automation – while the other one is the granting of higher wages to workers: this latter measure was not a philanthropic action, rather it was a premise for the mass production and the consumer-based economy which, in those years, would have depopulated in the global market⁶⁶.

There are at least two points which may be critically evaluated following a Marxian though pattern; first, the willingness to increase productivity through the use of machinery, and secondly the maniacal calculation of both workers' actions and movements, carrying them towards alienation. On this last point, Antonio Gramsci re-elaborated the Marxist theory of alienation arguing that, through the use of machines, the physical action of worker has been completely mechanized; the memory of the working process has built its nest both in muscle fascicles and in nerve bundles physically alienating the worker, but leaving, at the same time, his brain free from estrangement. In saying that, Antonio Gramsci wanted to highlight the fact that workers could not be transformed into “trained gorillas” without consciousness since they are thinking men and, even if physically alienated, they are able to reflect on their working conditions and also on eventual revolutionary intentions; also for these reasons, industrialists apply the policy of high wages so as to prevent various forms of uprising⁶⁷. In fact, according to Gramsci (1977), in this way, Fordism reduced the revolutionary propensity of workers, powering capitalism while weakening its subversion.

Regarding instead the willingness to increase the productivity, it could be argued that – in a Marxist perspective – the automation allows the growth of the commodity production in a shorter amount of time, by reducing the value of the workforce – as well as the value of commodity – and hence constituting for the capitalist relative surplus value.

⁶⁶ A. Gramsci, *Americanismo e Fordismo*, in *Serie Storia e Filosofia*, Volume IX, Universale Economica, 1950 Milano, p. 58, «Gli Alti Salari».

⁶⁷ *ivi*, p. 55, «Taylorismo e la meccanizzazione del lavoratore».

A historical philosophy of Fordist blueprint is that of Walt Whitman Rostow (1916-2003) who elaborated a theory which was completely the reverse of the Marxist perspective and which contemplated the world historical mission of the industry instead of the proletariat. In his analysis, Rostow argued that the mass consumption constitutes the means through which the mission of the industry is realized, and the global market the conjunction between countries towards industrial development.

In 'The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto'⁶⁸, W.W. Rostow analyzes the process of growth and economic modernization which affects the various countries and which can be traced back, regardless of the particular circumstances of each country, to five typical stages: the traditional society, preconditions to industrial expansion, industrial expansion (take off), economic maturity, and mass consumption society.

Briefly explaining these stages, *the traditional society* is described by Rostow as a community which evolves within limited production functions – outside of a technological apparatus – and which experiences a series of countless changes in the area of trade, in the levels of agricultural output and productivity, in the scale of manufactures, or in fluctuations in population and real income. According to Rostow, though, the lack of a technological apparatus prevents traditional society from experiencing a complete economic growth.

The second stage, that of *pre-conditions for take-off*, is characterized by a gradual evolution of modern science – scientific attitudes – happened in Western Europe during post-medieval period. This stage also provides for the widening of the market, both within Europe and overseas (with the institution of colonies), through the expansion of trade, the specialization of production, the development of inter-regional and international dependence, the creation of both financial institutions and new production functions.

The industrial expansion, known as *take-off*, allows countries to realize rapid growth in a limited number of sectors – i.e. cotton textiles, railroads – through modern industrial techniques. The result that has to be achieved by take-off countries is, among the others, to sustain an annual rate of net investment of at least ten per cent.

⁶⁸ W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth. A Non-Communist Manifesto*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1960, pp. 1-16.

Once a society has experienced the take-off, it moves towards *the drive to maturity*, the fourth stage, that is the period of the birth – and development – of other industrial sectors the outcome of which will determine a decrease of the percentage of farmers in rural areas and a consequent increase of number of urban workers.

Then, according to Rostow, industrialized societies can choose three directions to follow: firstly, the Keynesian pact, that is the implementation of public measures designed to offer increased security, welfare, and leisure to the working force. Secondly, the stimulation of private consumption – *the age of high mass consumption* – and, ultimately, the enlargement of the power of the mature nation on the world scene⁶⁹.

The directions that have been mentioned seem to be consistent with those taken by the United States during the 20th century, when the political and economic centre of gravity shifted from Europe to North-America, where the second industrial revolution actually happened. The stimulation of private consumption occurred also through Keynesian measures aiming at improving State intervention to raise the aggregate demand of household goods; it has become common consensus, throughout the 20th century, that an industrial consumer economy constituted the path to national economic growth.

The third direction enunciated by Rostow, the enlargement of the power of the mature nation on the world scene, clearly represents the US foreign policy after World War II.

In fact, the landmark of the US external action was the inaugural speech – Four Point Speech⁷⁰ – of the President Harry S. Truman in 1949, which rested on four cornerstones: first, the support of the United States to the United Nations and to the associated agencies; second, the continuation of the global economic recovery programs; third, the defense of the democratic countries against aggressions. Ultimately, the Truman's plan provided for the creation of a program directed towards 'underdeveloped regions' whose function would have been to import 'technical knowledge' from the US to Third World countries in order to foster the collaboration between private capital and local labor, with the aim of raising the standards of living, hence facilitating the economic growth.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ Harry S. Truman, Inaugural Address, 20 January 1949

Accessed at: <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/50yr_archive/inagural20jan1949.htm>
(December 2021)

This US program of development aid was completed by the financial role the Bretton Woods institutions (World Bank, International Monetary Fund); Third World countries were seen as commercial clients, which could access resources in order to build the infrastructures required for the fledging nation-states to be competitive in the global market. Moreover, the Truman's proposal was not only intended to foster economic growth and free trade, but also to promote democratization, political stability, and strategic allegiance with US. This plan seems to be part of the broader modernization theory – whose leading exponent was Walt Whitman Rostow – focused on the Western-style industrial development imposed as the universal standard to achieve economic, but also political, growth.

The elaboration of the modernization theory is influenced by two fundamental historical events: the decolonization process – began in 1947 with the Indian declaration of independence – and the Cold War. The US presumably wanted to take advantage of the precarious situation of the newly independent States, also in terms of containment towards the Soviet Bloc – in a perspective of bipolar control of the world.

Within the Point Four Program, Harry S. Truman underlined the fact that his perspective was to replace the 'old imperialism' with a new project whose objective would be to develop foreign domestic productive capabilities as a way to encourage global stability and prosperity. Specifically, Truman implemented the idea of 'self-help' – a critical component of the Point Four Program – which meant that the United States would have offered technical assistance to stimulate 'indigenous development', thus promoting the flow of private investment capital towards the so-called Third World countries⁷¹.

It seems evident that it was about heterodirected development, implemented from the inside, but with the means coming from the outside and, for this reason, far from being called indigenous development. It was instead a unique conception of the world, according to which all peoples of the earth had to follow the same path aspiring to a single purpose: the Western model of development, dominated by some principles, such as democracy, capitalism, industrialization⁷².

⁷¹ S. Macekura, *The Point Four Program and U.S. International Development Policy*, in *Political Science Quarterly*, The Academy of Political Science, 2013, pp. 127-160.

⁷² W. Sachs, G. Esteva, *Le développement: une course dans le monde conçu comme arène économique*, in *Des ruines du développement*, Ecosociété, Montréal 1996, p.14.

It was the first time that more than two billion people of the planet were “officially” considered “underdeveloped” and they were ordered to pursue the westernization in the contempt of their own values.

With regard to this mission praised by both Rostow and Truman, some post-development scholars, among which Gilbert Rist, have argued that the status of ‘underdeveloped’, as conceived during 1950s, has not been considered as the contrary of ‘developed’, rather it referred to its not yet complete form – its embryonic stage; under these circumstances, the acceleration of growth appears as the only way to bridge the gap⁷³.

It seemed important to highlight the historical emergence of the concept of ‘development’ and ‘underdevelopment’ since this distinction is used even today, with the difference that there are now three classes of nations: ‘developed countries’, ‘developing countries’, and ‘least developed countries’. One of the criteria, according to the Human Development Index⁷⁴, is the “decent standard of living” hence the measure of the Gross National Income (GNI), calculated by summing, or subtracting, to the Gross National Product (GNP) the various revenue streams between countries. The other two components of the Human Development Index are the life expectancy at birth (“Long and healthy life”) and the expected years of schooling (“Knowledge”).

Having clarified that the current concept of ‘development’ shows a degree of continuity with the past – further examinations will be provided below – all that remains is to analyze what is really changed from the Cold War period, and to what extent the so-called ‘developing countries’ were impacted by the latest wave of globalization.

Starting from the final decades of the 20th century, there has been a phase of industrial development which characterizes large part of the most advanced economy of the world and which is defined by high tech manufacturing and a greater organizational and productive flexibility, that abandons the traditional mass production system adjusting the supply of goods to an increasingly diversified demand of household goods, for the most part.

⁷³ G. Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*, Zed Books, 1997, pp. 78-83.

⁷⁴ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report*, Human Development Index. Accessed at: <<http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>> (December 2021)

Also different is the way to conceive the internationalization; in fact, there is a substantial difference between ‘international’, more suitable for the Fordist period, and “global”, most proper term for post-Fordism. During Fordism, it can be observed that the internationalization which occurs involves only the élites, a small group of big companies moving abroad a part of the business – in order to increase surplus value, according to a Marxist explanation –, while the other enterprises remain anchored to national boundaries, by practicing transnational markets only for supplies and sales. Instead, during the current post-Fordist period, there has been a mass internationalization that has characterized also small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), other than multinational corporations, bypassing national boundaries while entering a worldwide network steeped in a deregulation system where the law of market governs⁷⁵.

Nowadays, off-shoring – the organization of production that is dislocated in different regions or states – and Global Value Chains – activities, roles and people involved in the production and post-sale of goods and services in different geographical areas – are words on the agenda in the market-oriented economy, and companies often choose to move production in low-wage countries – i.e. developing countries – in order to spend less and to increase final profit.

Moreover, neoliberal approaches that are adopted in the market today, according to which there is a need to eliminate control on prices, to deregulate capital market and to lower trade barriers, reducing at the same time the intervention of the State in the economy⁷⁶ – through privatization and austerity – tend to be also used for the implementation of heterodirected economic policies in “developing countries”.

By way of example, international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), offer loans to countries in trouble with the Balance of Payments (BoP), having an high foreign debt, in change for structural adjustment reforms – i.e. privatization and restrictive fiscal policies – that allow the market-oriented economy to move forward with its objectives – reducing fiscal deficit of the recipient countries – and the international economic balance to be maintained.

⁷⁵ R. Grandinetti, E. Rullani, *Impresa transnazionale ed economia globale*, Carocci, 1996, pp. 125-136.

⁷⁶ T. C. Boas, J. Gans-Morse, *Neoliberalism, From New Liberal Philosophy to Anti-Liberal Slogan*, Studies in Comparative International Development, June 2009, pp- 137-161.

African and Asian countries still endure the unequal exchange – exporting raw materials at a lower price compared to the cost of import from Western countries – that causes not negligible difficulties to the national economies of those countries, forcing them to recur to loans, increasing their foreign debt and, at the same time, often worsening their situation due to unemployment and recession – as shown during the Asian crisis of 1997⁷⁷.

Having exposed an initial analysis of how the “international aid” works nowadays, it could be argued that, even if the economic system is changed entering a phase of post-Fordist globalization, the idea of “self help” towards “underdeveloped countries” conceived by Harry S. Truman is, to a certain extent, still actual; the involvement of international financial institutions and the action of both state and non-state actors in particular geographical areas shall be consistent with an idea of capitalistic and neo-liberal development. But, what are the theoretical foundations behind the current institutional and non-institutional action towards developing countries?

2.1.2. Growth patterns: neoclassical, neoliberal and behavioral economics

Assuming that the functioning of the capitalist economy is almost ever unresponsive to the equilibrium models developed, whereas Marxist theory of the crisis, as mentioned before, seems to give more answers, a deep analysis of neoclassical and neoliberal approaches will be however provided.

Concerning economic growth, neoclassical paradigm focuses on the theoretical explanation of why the market economy countries of the last two centuries have experienced a constantly increasing per capital income, postulating that the production occurs under competitive conditions. Keynesian principles of State intervention in promoting full employment have been required in interpreting neoclassical theories only in certain systemic situations – i.e. around the time of Fordism to increase mass consumption – but, starting from the 1980s, the pattern of intervention in the economy has been abandoned to adopt instead an approach of economic deregulation and privation, integrated to various aspects of orthodox economics.

⁷⁷ N. Chomsky, *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order*, Seven Stories Press, 1998, p.81.

Robert M. Solow, an American neoclassical economist, developed during 1950s the exogenous growth model under which assumption the increasing per capita income is a result of the positive variations of two inputs, labor and capital, interchangeable productive factors which approach the economy to the steady state. The increase of per capita income which is not explained by the rise of labor and capital, is ascribed to the technological progress; the growth rate shall be equal to the rate of increase in technical advance, an external variant which leads the economy to the steady state.

Moreover, according to Solow, the best saving rate is the one that maximizes the consumption; the central axis of accumulation is thus the *physical capital* through the creation of great enterprises, the evolution of the mass and large-scale production⁷⁸.

By this growth pattern, other neoclassical approaches have been developed in the last few decades, including the endogenous growth model which gives particular importance to the *human capital*; Paul Romer (1986) underlines the ability to generate endogenous growth through the knowledge that has been developed in the economic system, which promotes the increase in productivity thus favoring a rise of the product per capita. Generally, “knowledge” is referred to scientific and technological understanding that has been learned within the production system or thanks to the education system; according to Romer, in fact, the ground-breaking companies seek to invent new products which generates profits and a further incentive to innovate. Furthermore, such knowledge becomes also available to other enterprises, reducing research and development costs for all businesses.

Finally, according to this model unlike that of Solow, economies that record the highest saving rates grow faster given that they endogenously allocate more resources to inventive activities; Romer thus provides for a connection between resources allocation and increase in productivity⁷⁹.

Instead, the theoretical explanation of Robert Lucas (1988), another economist who supports the endogenous growth model, focuses on the capacity of the human capital, as opposed to the physical capital, to produce positive externalities; the skills acquired

⁷⁸ L. Vasapollo, *Trattato di economia applicata: analisi critica della mondializzazione capitalista*, Jaca Book, March 2007, pp. 103-109.

⁷⁹ P. Romer, *Increasing Returns and Long-Run Growth*, Journal of Political Economy, 1989, pp. 1002-1037.

through education and the experience of workers shall increase productivity through exchange of knowledge⁸⁰.

However, it seems that terms like “scientific knowledge” or “education” refer, in this context, to Western ways of thinking and that the central objective is not of “learning about”, rather of increasing productivity and per capita income, more utilitarian aims. Furthermore, the endogenous growth model does not provide for obstacles to economic growth, with the exception of state economic policy that may hinder the functioning of the market economy; herein lies the proximity between the neoclassical and the neoliberal – privatization and deregulation – economic approaches⁸¹.

At this juncture, it can be deduced that the neoclassical paradigm according to which the market works when, under “appropriate” conditions, the benefit for the manufacturer and the utility for the consumer are both maximized, constitutes the ideological foundation for the structural adjustment programs adopted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. One of the main objectives of the IMF is to favor and promote a balanced growth of the international trade; for this reason, countries regularly presenting trade deficits are to be supported financially in order to not be excluded from the international business arena. Furthermore, in line with neoclassical and neoliberal approaches, the structural reforms are directed to transform the antiquated economic structures of low-income countries into successful market-oriented economies where markets are supposed to work freely through measures of deregulation and privatization.

Policies implemented by the International Monetary Fund generally follow a two-stage path: first, the short-term economic stabilization, through the reduction of fiscal deficit and the control of inflation and, secondly, the deployment of structural reforms that allow the country to be integrated into the global market.

It therefore seems that the concept of development shows an essentially neoclassical conception of economic wellness and growth in richness; thus, a quantitative dimension of growth still prevails and provides for an increase of total production of goods and services. This is reflected in a rise of GDP of a country over a medium to long term

⁸⁰ R. Lucas, *On the Mechanics of Economic Development*, Journal of Monetary Economics, 1986, pp. 3-42.

⁸¹ R. Herrera, *The Hidden Face of Endogenous Growth Theory: Analytical and Ideological Perspectives in the Era of Neoliberal Globalization*, National Center for Scientific Research, CES-Matisse, December 2004, pp. 243-255.

period, causing its per capita income to increase, together with other redistributive factors⁸².

Instead, the broader concept of the “overall economic development” includes other aspects not related to GDP metrics, such as structural data like the education among the population, mortality rates, life expectancy, but also more abstract notions including political freedom, social security etc. Even if, in the calculation of the Human Development Index (HDI)⁸³, as already mentioned, the requirements of the expected years of schooling and life expectancy are contained, the quantitative measure through the GDP calculations – or GNI – continue to be the most used method since it is the easier numerical criteria to be assessed. Unfortunately, however, economic growth does not necessarily imply an improvement of social wellness, nor an equitable distribution of income; the quantitative measure keeps hidden many inequalities that capitalism brings around. GDP metrics does not consider the differences between formal and real economy; the concept of “added value” presupposes that the simple reason that money flows between people means to generate wellness.

Other weaknesses of economic “developmentalism” are, by way of illustration, the negative impacts on wellbeing of activities increasing GDP: war productions, in fact, rise the GDP, while at the same time wars have harmful effects on the well-being of society; again, mineral extractions increase GDP while favoring environmental disasters. Instead, quantitative economic growth ignores positive aspects of activities that would improve social welfare, such as equal distribution of both wealth and income. Moreover, GDP does not record intertemporal aspects like the accelerating consumption of natural resources, the capital depreciation and the foreign indebtedness. In general, GDP measures all activities which contain a money transaction, neglecting the others and bypassing their effects; for this reason, quantitative growth does not include social and natural costs.

According to a critical perspective, poverty is a consequence of underdevelopment and problems could be explained by North-South dependency relations; for this reason it

⁸² L. Vasapollo, *Trattato di economia applicata: analisi critica della mondializzazione capitalista*, Jaca Book, March 2007, pp. 109-111

⁸³ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report*, Human Development Index (HDI), Data Center.

Accessed at: <<http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>> (January 2022)

becomes increasingly necessary to reformulate development cooperation and, more generally, international relations.

What if the object of study needed to change, settling instead underdevelopment as a consequence of both development and quantitative economic growth? The Marxist economist Paul Baran⁸⁴ (1956), in fact, conceived the history of capitalism as a collection of various experiences within a general similar structure, each of which passes through, at different times, its main stages; according to this perspective, “*re-think*” the relational dynamics between concepts and factors becomes fundamental.

Classical and neoclassical theory argued that there was a positive relationship between commerce and growth; the conventional theory of international trade, also known as Heckscher-Ohlin theory, provides that an open trade economy maximizes the global production and increases the wellness of all countries. This perspective does not analyze the terms of trade, assuming that they are conducted following a fair system; in reality, looking at price indices of imports and exports, CEPAL (Comisión Económica Para América Latina y el Caribe) determined a deterioration of trade terms due to the systematic transfer of resources from poorer to richer nations.

Deepening the analysis, it turns out that the relationship between trade, quantitative growth and development is not linear and not necessarily positive. Some of the causes of the deterioration of trade terms are: first of all, the inelasticity in demand of primary products, driving force behind development in many countries; second, the existence of different structures of labor market which does not ensure that all nations increase salaries after having raised the production; third, the protectionist and discriminatory practices implemented against “less developed” countries, and fourth, the exchange relations which have influences on the purchasing power of exports.

However, the theory of comparative advantages elaborated by David Ricardo (1817), according to which each country can benefit from international business, still hold some consensus among economists who are supporters of free trade and deregulated market as sources of development. This line of reasoning posits that: a low interest rate causes an attractive to make real investments and to access credits which increase the manufacturing, that means a further manpower needed to work on the new production. More jobs will increase household incomes, thus stimulating consumption and saving

⁸⁴ P. A. Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth*, Penguin Books, 1956, pp.265-298.

which will be channeled into the financial sector. Neoclassical and neoliberal theories normally take into consideration the relationship between salaries, interest rate and prices, postulating that the implementation of international trade under the circumstances just explained would lead the economy at steady-state.

Anyway, neoclassical economists acknowledge that there are three problems in the market: the tendency of the competition to eliminate itself, the predominance of the material interest on the moral context of society, and the existence of public goods and external factors⁸⁵.

Neoclassical economics postulates that individual is rational in its choices and that he is prone to defend its own interests, with the aim of maximizing his well-being (through the utility function, mathematically speaking). In fact, each individual pursues its objectives trying to achieve them as widely as possible and realizing them at the lowest cost; for this reason, the subject of neoclassical theory is known as *homo economicus*, a human being who shows itself able to sequentially dispose his preferences, maximizing his satisfaction through the achievement of utility, by also analyzing and predicting his best alternatives.

Subsequently, during 1990s, a branch of traditional economics has been integrated with some concepts of psychology, progressively abandoning the assumption that all people are rational; thus was born the behavioral development economics. This renewed theory provides for systematic deviations from standard economic patterns in terms of beliefs, preferences, and decision-making; it is a model that is more closer to classical – i.e. Adam Smith – rather than neoclassical economics.

In practice, according to behavioral economists, deviations are captured by the use of economic models, but they are motivated through psychology; individuals do not always make rational choices and they may follow, especially in the long-term, *non-standard preferences* – i.e. present bias, reference-dependent preferences (loss aversion), and social preferences. Furthermore, this theory also treats *non-standard beliefs* and *non-standard decision making*, as important factors to establish deviations from neoclassical and classical models.

⁸⁵ L. Vasapollo, *Trattato di economia applicata: analisi critica della mondializzazione capitalista*, Jaca Book, March 2007, pp.111-116.

The majority of behavioral economists analyze the “behavioral distortions as universal features of human behavior⁸⁶” in order to examine some of the particular situations of developing countries. Starting from labor markets, it may be deduced that there are substantial differences between rich countries and developing economies: the job market of these latter is characterized by high levels of informality, of casual labor and high degrees of self-employment. One implication of self-employment and informal work is that workers may be more influenced from behavioral biases – i.e. the experiment conducted by Frank Schilbach in India (2019) showed high-level of drunkenness during the work day.

Furthermore, the share of the population working in the agricultural sector is much higher in poor nations than in rich countries; the majority of the labor employed in agriculture is hired through informal contracts (Kaur 2019). Even if this sector of production shows many features of efficiency, limited dispersion of wages across workers and nominal wage rigidities persist (Kaur 2019, Breza et al. 2018); these factors seem to be enforced through social sanctions, such as the fact that workers refused public offers of jobs with low wages and, at the same time, they accept those offers – with the same salary – if made in the private sector.

Behavioral explanations could also be provided with regard to female labor force participation (FLFP): there are only 52% of women in “less developed” countries who participate in workforce, while 78% of men results employed (Duflo 2012). Standard explanations that are provided regard the biological differences between men and women, strictly linked with the traditional paradigm of wage work and domestic work – the first best suited to men, and the second more appropriate for women. Instead, a behavioral interpretation seems to be more comprehensive: it denotes a tendency to low-self efficiency (McKelway, 2018) and the presence of social norms suppressing the female labor force participation (Bursztyn et al. 2018).

As concern firms in developing countries, there are several reasons to assume that they are more likely to diverge from neoclassical parameters, unlike the enterprises in rich countries. The reasons behind this assumption are mainly related to some typical characteristics of firms in poorer nations: first of all, the fact that, due to imports

⁸⁶ M. Kremer, G. Rao, F. Schilbach, *Handbook of Behavioral Economics*, Behavioral Development Economics, 2019, pp. 349-393.

restrictions and high tariffs, competitive pressure of enterprises may be lower. Second, firms are small and often there is a lack of separation between small firm economics and household economics; third, it is observed that, into the labor market of developing countries, workers are less trained or educated, and there is limited potential to receive on-the-job training⁸⁷.

Modern economists, as was demonstrated in the previous lines, assume that, during the whole history, enterprises maximize profit and individuals optimize utility; instead, many Marxists argue that in pre-capitalist societies there is no tendency to maniacally calculate actions and money. The answer given by behavioral economists on the subject relies on the evaluation of differences in social preferences across cultures: trust and reciprocity are two qualities that are important to generate economic and political cooperative behavior. Assuming that developing countries may have lower levels of trust and reciprocity, behavioral economists wonder about the possible reasons: Nunn and Wantchekon (2011) argue that the lack of cooperative behavior by those countries could be a long-term consequence of slave trade, while another body of work (e.g. LaPorta et al., 1997) claims that low levels of trust are related to institutional features and per-capita income of countries.

Finally, as regards moral attitude, psychology and behavioral economics have focused mainly on WEIRD – Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic – populations; morality is a compound of both harm and fairness for them. Instead, for non-WEIRD countries morality is a broader concept that may include other cultural aspects and beliefs which are correlated with economic, political and social behaviors⁸⁸ (Haidt, 2012).

The analysis of some aspects relating to behavioral development economics have helped, in the context of this work, to understand the possible deviations from the neoclassical benchmark with regard to the “development project” currently implemented in some developing countries. Assumptions supported by behavioral economists are not here taken for granted, since they seem to be still far from being included in a post-development perspective; however, they may constitute a first step towards the critical analysis of capital centric development.

⁸⁷ *ivi*, pp. 401-415.

⁸⁸ *ivi*, pp. 420-428.

2.1.3. *Welfare capitalism or welfare state: social policies for developing countries*

Historically, the idea of welfare capitalism developed in 1919, in the United States, when three important industrialists David Rockefeller, Henry Ford and Andrew Carnegie signed a deal which committed firms to ensure some form of well-being to its employees and their families. Basically, the concept of welfare capitalism envisaged the social responsibility of the capitalist system towards the working class, by virtue of the principle that the social costs arising from the system of enterprise were to be borne by the enterprises themselves.

This was a very important principle, but it lacked a substantial element: universalism. In order to enjoy social protection, it was necessary for the worker to operate in one of the factories that had signed the commitment.

The performance deficit of Welfare Capitalism, linked to its typically private nature, allowed the well-known English liberal economist John M. Keynes, in 1939, to write one of his articles – *Democracy and efficiency* – that will determine the birth of the modern welfare system based on universalism.

This new foundational dimension of welfare is based today on the relationships between three complexes: the public entity (state, regions, municipalities, etc.), enterprises – or rather the business community – and organized civil society. According to the principles of circular subsidiarity, the three complexes must interact in a virtuous and systematic way to plan interventions and ensure their management.

Nevertheless, a marked difference between the two kinds of welfares can be identified only theoretically (and maybe historically) since, in practice, they are both inserted in a capitalist perspective, which is deeply connected with the economy. Social relations between individuals are not usually treated as disconnected from the capitalist mode of production.

Hence, it seems necessary to understand whether, according to a Western perspective, welfare is conceived as an improver of social wellness of individuals, or as a means to enhance the productive process⁸⁹ – and subsequently incomes, consumptions and savings, following neoclassical and neoliberal patterns. In order to address this

⁸⁹ N. Rudra, *Welfare States in Developing Countries: Unique or Universal?*, The Journal of Politics, May 2007, pp. 378-396.

dichotomy, comparative political economy (CPE) converge debates will be analyzed, trying also to examine other studies which has been focused on the systematic divergence hypothesis. Afterwards, EU and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) efforts to promote social protection in developing countries will be handled, highlighting both the strengths and the weaknesses of the programs implemented.

Between 1960s and 1990s, CPE scholars believed that convergence could be experienced only by post-industrial societies, since there was the necessity to arrange particular social and economic forces in order to achieve successful industrialization.

By defining convergence as “the tendency of societies to grow more alike, to develop similarities in structures, processes and performances”⁹⁰, it can be assumed that societies which have developed in the same period – Western societies – are more alike to experience converge, while less developed countries (LDCs), being at the early stages of economic development at different rates, are marked by extreme divergence.

International political economy (IPE) studies, during mid-90s, began to include less developed countries in the convergence debate: the level of economic development of those nations lost its importance, considering instead the harmonization of social arrangements and domestic practices to the growth and prosperity of the global economy, as a criteria to achieve convergence.

LDCs, in practice, had to integrate their markets to the global economic system; expanding capital flows and trade, led governments to implement restrictive fiscal policies to reduce unproductive social spending. IPE scholars have not analyzed the real content of national social policies, rather they have simply consider the level of social spending necessary to integrate each other national markets.

Instead, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), LDCs experience extreme divergence; welfare states are not completely possible in those countries because of low economic development. From the perspective of the OECD, the presence of the welfare states is a side-effect of industrialization; only countries with high levels of economic development may implement social policies and

⁹⁰ C. Kerr, *The Future of Industrial Societies: Convergence or Continuing Diversity?*, Harvard University Press, 1983, p.3.

structures – i.e. pluralistic decision-making, and the capability of the State to extract resources – realizing then convergence.

On the contrary, IPE scholars remain anchored to the idea that a “LDC welfare state” would be possible, having regard to the various similarities between the political economies of many less developed countries; the challenges of today’s globalizing economy bring less developed countries to face similar challenges and, for this reason, it is expected that they may converge on neoliberal policies in order to promote exports and attract capitals, thus expanding markets, while reducing social spending. However, it seems not clear why less social spending have to be necessarily correlated with the implementation of neo-liberal policies.

It appears that there are two opposing theories regarding LDCs: an extreme divergence theory, advocated by OECD and CPE scholars, and a convergence hypothesis claiming for a unique “LDC welfare state”, sustained by IPE experts. The assumption of *systematic divergence* in LDCs is not covered; Esping-Andersen⁹¹ (1990) and Hall and Soskice⁹² (2001) assert that the level of development does not indispensably indicate the direction of national political economies, rather, government policies influence social well-being and economic performance. For this reason, it seems not adequate to assume that a unique welfare state is possible in LDCs, nor that those nations are necessarily characterized by extreme divergence; Esping-Andersen predicts the existence of two ideal types of welfare states in LDCs, the *productive welfare state*, which promotes market dependence of citizens, and the *protective welfare state*, which protect individuals from the market. A cluster analysis, conducted by the expert Nitra Rudra⁹³ (2007), highlights the existence of a third group of developing countries which shows elements of both: the weak *dual welfare state*.

Protective welfare states are historically defined as systems where governments focus their efforts on decommodification, avoiding integration into international markets; politicians normally exercise control over the economy, providing subsidies to both workers and firms. Even if it seems that protective welfare states can show elements of both socialism and conservatism, in developing countries features of none of the two

⁹¹ G. Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Princeton University Press, 1990, pp. 9-35.

⁹² P. Hall, David Soskice, *Varieties of Capitalism*, Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 1-70.

⁹³ N. Rudra, *Welfare States in Developing Countries: Unique or Universal?*, *The Journal of Politics*, May 2007, pp. 378-396.

regimes are observed, since decommodification occurs before proletarianization and hence social rights are directed towards a small privileged clientele; in those countries, welfare policies might not be redistributive.

On the contrary, commodification is extremely important for productive welfare states, which encourage both exports and the participation in the global market through competitiveness; in doing so, governments must refrain from excessively intervening in the functioning of the economy. The State support can only be justified if it is directed both towards capital and workers simultaneously; this kind of behavior is typical of neoliberal countries. While it is possible that a protective welfare state might evolve into a productive welfare state, the contrary is less more likely to happen.

Examining the analysis carried out by the scholar Nita Rudra⁹⁴, the existence of three clusters can be defined; these findings clearly challenge both the extreme divergence and convergence assumptions.

Countries like Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Rep. of Korea, Kuwait, Malaysia, Mauritius, Panama, Paraguay, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, are inserted within the cluster 1; they are characterized by productive welfare states which privilege commodification.

Instead, cluster 3, which includes countries such as Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, India, Islamic Rep. of Iran, Lesotho, Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey, Zambia and Zimbabwe, shows elements of protective welfare state; levels of State's intervention are higher in those countries, and investments on housing and tertiary education are recorded. But, in several LDCs – e.g. Morocco, Egypt, and Lesotho – literacy rates remain extremely low, despite the high public spending directed to education; this may suggest that funding is not always used for the rights purposes – typical of patronage systems – or that levels of expenditure are not commensurate with the degree of need.

Lastly, cluster 2, which includes only South American countries – Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Uruguay – appears to comprehend elements of both productive and protective welfare states, even if they do not register high scores for any category; they are called

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

“weak dual welfare states” since they implement more proletarianization measures than the protective States, but less than the productive ones⁹⁵.

This research demonstrates that the existence of a systematic divergence between LDCs can be identified; three types of welfare states have been found and they are not necessarily a side effect of postindustrial development, as evidenced by the analysis of cluster 3 which shows the presence of protective welfare states. Equally, the extreme convergence thesis, which envisages the existence of a unique welfare regime for LDCs, is challenged by the findings of the analysis, which clearly demonstrate the presence of different kind of distribution systems⁹⁶.

Furthermore, it may be noted that three North African countries, Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt, are located into the cluster of protective welfare states, while international financial institutions, the EU and multinational corporations, deal with them as productive regimes, trying to include those countries into the global market system. Besides, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia show high levels of corruption and, for this reason, funds provided are not always directed to the right social purposes.

In the field of social protection, the European Union intervene on the basis of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁹⁷ with particular attention to some precise goals: reducing poverty (SDG 1), ending hunger (SDG 2), ensuring good health and well-being (SDG 3), achieving gender equality (SDG 5), promoting decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), and reducing inequalities (SDG 10).

The approach used by the European Union focuses on economic transformation and on the implementation of policies that mobilize resources, to engender adequate revenues for social protection. In order to achieve those objectives, Socieux+, the EU Expertise on Social Protection, Labour and Employment, is a technical assistance facility which is employed to support the creation of social and labor policies; it intervenes in the areas of: social insurance, social assistance, labor, and employment.

The EU, together with the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors and UNICEF, are implementing a program, with a financing of EUR 22.9 million, whose purpose is to ensure sustainable financing in

⁹⁵ *ibid.*

⁹⁶ *ivi*, p.393.

⁹⁷ United Nations, *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, A/RES/70/1 Accessed at: <www.sustainabledevelopment.un.org> (January 2022)

order to improve public finance management and to strengthen social protection systems⁹⁸.

Iran, Iraq, Yemen, in Middle-East, and nations that fall within the framework of the European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI), such as Algeria, Rep. of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Rep. of Moldova, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia, Ukraine, are all eligible countries under Socieux+⁹⁹.

In the field of labor and employment, Socieux+ encourages the implementation of active job market policies, supporting both workers – e.g. labor relations and working conditions – and firms in their inclusion in the global economy. As regards instead social protection, Socieux+ is committed to ensure both social insurance, focusing on contributory pensions, unemployment protection and health, and social assistance, including also cash transfer programs, support for child and old people, and public works¹⁰⁰.

Contributing to the design and the implementation of social policies in partner countries, Socieux+ responds to the direct requests of social partner organizations and of public institutions, preparing short-term micro-projects and then implementing them in the target area. However, in doing so, it does not appear that Socieux+ differentiates countries on the basis of their attitudes towards social welfare; the previous analysis of systematic divergence, which displays the existence of protective, productive and weak dual welfare states, does not seem to be taken into account. It is favored, instead, a unique approach towards LDCs which, according to international political economists, envisages the realization of a “LDC welfare state” believing in the extreme convergence hypothesis, through the implementation of mainly neo-liberal policies and the introduction, of those countries, in the global market system.

Furthermore, cash-based transfers to LDCs from the EU or from other international institutions, fail to consider how weak those welfare states could be; as previously mentioned, even protective countries, which normally should invest in public policies,

⁹⁸ European Commission, International Partnerships, Social Protection.

Accessed at: <https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/topics/social-protection_en#related-projects> (January 2022)

⁹⁹ Socieux+, *EU expertise on social protection, labour and employment*, list of countries eligible under Socieux+.

Accessed at: <<http://socieux.eu/>> (January 2022)

¹⁰⁰ Socieux+, *EU expertise on social protection, labour and employment*, Socieux’s Work.

Accessed at : <<http://socieux.eu/actions/>> (January 2022)

are frequently more focused on the implementation of elitist policies. Due to the high levels of corruption recorded in some of LDCs¹⁰¹, even if governments operate through public policies, levels of wealth, education, literacy and, in general wellbeing, might not be higher after the public intervention. On the other hand, the EU has not yet found an effective way to ensure that cash-transfers are fruitful, getting into the right hands and being implemented for the supposed objectives. In reality, Socieux+ foresees the monitoring and evaluation phase, but probably it appears difficult to trace money transfer in all its movements; in this way, the policy implemented – with the funds provided – run through the dissemination of results phase and, often, is reformulated without having understood where exactly the lack of administrative capacities and corruption have occurred.

Finally, it's worth recalling the concept of circular subsidiarity in the promotion of welfare state: as mentioned, social system is built today through the dialogue between the public sector, enterprises, and organized civil society. Thus, the international promotion of welfare shall be based on the same logic; EU initiatives on external action – such as the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024¹⁰² – foresee, for their realization, strong partnerships, at different levels, between public and private sectors, including other stakeholders – like civil society. Those collaborations may be constructive if well-balanced, but they can also bring out some particular interests over the others; as will be analyzed in the last chapter of the present work, few multinationals that are theoretically engaged in the promotion of sustainable and inclusive growth in LDCs, may serve as lobbies and advance their particular economic interests in some areas of the global South, failing to concretely intervene in the promotion of welfare policies.

¹⁰¹ Transparency International, the global coalition against corruption, *Corruption Perception Index*, latest data available: 2020. For the purpose of the analysis conducted in the present work, it's worth mentioning some data of North-African and Middle-Eastern countries.

Score: from 0-9 (highly corrupt) to 90-100 (very clean).

North Africa's scores: Morocco (40), Algeria (36), Tunisia (44), Libya (17), Egypt (33)

Middle-East's scores : Jordan (49), Syria (14), Lebanon (25), Turkey (40), Israel (60).

Accessed at: <<https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/tur>> (January 2022)

¹⁰² European Commission, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, *EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024*, Brussels, 25.3.2020, JOIN(2020) 5 final.

2.2. Neo-liberalism as a “Western” ideological project of importing development in Arab countries

2.2.1. Legacy of Bretton Woods institutions and their concerted role with the EU vis-à-vis international cooperation

First and foremost, it is worth explaining why the international interventions – carried out by both state and non-states actors – promoting development in Arab countries are deemed “Western”. What does Eurocentric mean in the context of international cooperation? In order to answer to those questions, it seems necessary to historically retrace the establishment and the evolution of post-World War II global order; the birth of the Bretton Woods system, in 1944, spawned a set of rules concerning international commercial and financial relations between the main industrialized countries of the Western world¹⁰³. Moreover, the foundation of the Bretton Woods agreement was a common belief in a system based on capitalism; member countries, in fact, shared the same principles regarding policies regulating market mechanisms and the protection of private ownership of the means of production.

The main objectives of the Bretton Woods system were to ensure the international economic balance and to realize the common goals of member States, mainly related to the progressive liberalization of trade and the defense of joint economic interests.

Bretton Woods agreement established the creation of two multilateral bodies: the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). The IMF was appointed to oversee the monetary stability, by lending to countries in deficit situations, with the aim of rebuilding an open and multilateral international trade. The original purpose of the IBRD, instead, was to finance the reconstruction of nations involved in the World War II; then, the objective has been widened involving also the funding to developing countries, usually in exchange for the adoption of austerity policies – today, the World Bank Group includes the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Development Association (IDA), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the

¹⁰³ M. D. Bordo, B. Eichengreen, *A Retrospective on the Bretton Woods System: Lessons for International Monetary Reform*, University of Chicago Press, January 1993, pp. 3-85.

International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID), and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA).

Bretton Woods system also spawned the creation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) – forerunner of the World Trade Organization (WTO) – which, in 1947, established the basis for a multilateral system of commercial relations with the aim of promoting the liberalization of world trade. As regards relations between GATT and the European Community – later become the European Union – these are governed, in Community law, by article 113 of the Treaty of Rome (subsequently amended by the Treaty of Maastricht) which gives the European Union exclusive competence in commercial policy matters.

Over the years, countries participating in the GATT have negotiated new trade agreements to which an increasing number of countries have adhered from time to time. Each new set of negotiated agreements (as well as the sessions held to reach them) has been referred to as a "round". In general, each of these agreements has led member countries to reduce tariffs on trade (albeit with numerous exceptions provided for both specific products and certain countries).

During the Fourth Round, in 1956, the future strategy towards developing countries participating in GATT was outlined; many ex colonies of the global South became independent already during 1950s and there was the desire, predominantly from the Western side, to boost economic growth in those newborn countries in order also to introduce them into the global market, expanding their trade and progressively eliminating tariffs.

Throughout the Kennedy Round, between 1964 and 1967, thirty-six non-aligned countries participated to the negotiations but, according to “linear nations”, they had no rights to get involved in the “confrontation and justice” procedure. However, due to the numerical weight of non-aligned countries, they managed to gain some success: the food aid program, the stabilization of raw material prices and the exemption from the rule of ‘reciprocity’, which allowed them to be partly exempted from the liberalization process. Since the Uruguay Round¹⁰⁴, held from 1986 to 1994, in response to the extension of free trade areas, which included both industrial and agricultural products, services, investments and intellectual properties, developing nations began to suffer

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*

heavier transition costs, mainly due to the erosion of tariff preferences they previously enjoyed, and an increase in imported agricultural prices.

It might be argued that all the institutions created as a result of the Bretton Woods system, were, and still are, inclined to promote the interests of more industrialized countries – first signatories of the agreements. Moreover, within WTO and IMF, there are member States that weigh more than others; the US and EU countries are very influential within the decision-making process of those institutions.

After the decolonization process, some EU countries, such as France and Great Britain, kept close ties with former colonies; the theorists of neocolonialism claim that, despite the military control has – at least *de iure* – been abandoned, many countries are still in position of dependence *vis-à-vis* more industrialized nations. European States realized that political domination was no longer as advantageous and that, instead, it was far more profitable to lay the groundwork for strong financial and economic ties. It is assumed that colonial powers, also through multinationals, exert an economic and cultural control over former colonies; that would be an “informal” colonialism, a temporal extension of the more formal and direct colonialism.

The principal legacy of colonialism was the integration of former colonies into the global market system, to such an extent that pre-capitalist societies started to believe that the only way to achieve growth was the material progress. In fact, economic integration was the only alternative provided to former colonies who, for their part, desired to receive most of the things the West had to offer them, without realizing that, in doing so, they would have been reintegrated into a relationship of dependency with the more industrialized countries¹⁰⁵.

The idea of ‘Eurocentric’ and ‘Western’ development cooperation may be clearly explained by the definition of hegemony, provided by Antonio Gramsci¹⁰⁶, as a system in which a certain way of thinking is dominant and constitutes the only way to see reality.

¹⁰⁵ T. Obadina, *The myth of Neo-colonialism*, Africa Economic Analysis, 2000
Accessed at: <<https://web.archive.org/web/20100611074242/http://www.afbis.com/analysis/neo-colonialism.html>> (January 2022)

¹⁰⁶ G. Cospito, *Egemonia/egemonico nei “Quaderni del carcere” (e prima)*, International Gramsci Journal, 2016, pp. 50-88.
Accessed at: <https://www.fondazionegramsci.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/06_Egemonia_egemonico-nei-Quaderni-del-carcere_Giuseppe_Cospito.pdf> (January 2022)

Analyzing the Maastricht Treaty, under the Title XVII, which deals with the subject of “development cooperation”, it is highlighted that European community policy shall promote the sustainable economic and social development of distressed countries, by encouraging their gradual *integration into the world economy*. The Article 130u of this section also emphasizes the importance of fostering and consolidating democracy, rule of law and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in third countries.¹⁰⁷

It seems thus that the concept of “development cooperation” fostered by the European Union is consistent with the definition of hegemony provided by Antonio Gramsci; the integration of developing countries into the global economy represents here a clear intention of “imposing” an outlook on reality that Western countries believe as the only way to reach growth and progress.

The International Monetary Fund, together with the European Commission and the European Central Bank (ECB), representing the European Troika¹⁰⁸, work in close cooperation to deal with structural adjustments and austerity policies vis-à-vis countries with high foreign debts. Moreover, the World Bank Group and the Troika align their policies towards developing countries, so as to promote the ultimate goal of economic and political integration with those nations; for this reason, it seems not possible to examine the European Neighborhood Policy, without also analyzing the interventions of other International Financial Institutions in the Global South.

The next subsection will in fact deepen the most recent strategies implemented by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund vis-à-vis North African and Middle Eastern countries.

¹⁰⁷ Council of the European Communities, Commission of the European Communities, *Maastricht Treaty, Title XVII Development Cooperation, art.130u*, 1992, p.60.

Accessed at: <www.europa.eu> (January 2022)

¹⁰⁸ The use of the term originated in journalism in 2010, on the occasion of the interventions of representatives of the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund, aimed at resolving the economic crisis in Greece: the intervention of the Troika has allowed, in September 2011, to convince Germany to activate the so-called "rescue fund", to ensure economic oxygen to Greece and avert the risk of sovereign insolvency of the state. In negotiating aid to Greece, the troika has demanded in return the establishment of austerity policies, through various cuts in public spending. In addition, the Troika requested measures to reduce corruption and tax evasion, reduction of the tax wedge and structural reforms to improve the efficiency of the public administration. Accessed at: <<https://www.esm.europa.eu/publications/safeguarding-euro/enter-troika-european-commission-imf-ecb>> (January 2022)

2.2.2. World Bank and IMF strategies for MENA region

On July 2nd 2021, the World Bank published an article containing its future strategies towards Middle East and North Africa¹⁰⁹. When examining the current situation in MENA region, the World Bank report highlights that the human capital and governance challenges remain high also due to the influence of the States in economies.

This statement seems to be a clear neoliberal intention of empower private actors, progressively diminishing the public intervention on economy; State Ownership Enterprises (SOEs) are in fact regarded, by International Financial Institutions (IFIs), as obstacles to the achievement of the purpose of market integration and globalization.

Moreover, in the article previously introduced, the World Bank presents both near-term and long-term objectives towards the realization of economic transformation in MENA region; the greater part of these goals are closely linked to the enhancement of the functioning of both the private sector and the banking system. Indeed, the World Bank is interested in restoring trust, through “transparency, tech-enabled service delivery and debt management” and in supporting the transformation of the private sector into a competitive mechanism, also focused on digitalization and economic regional integration.

According to a Marxist analysis, examined in the first paragraph of this chapter, the process of digitalization and technical progress were thought to be due to the capital tendency towards accumulation. The commercial sector which firstly innovates the production can raise the prices of the produced goods in order to increase its extraordinary surplus value. But, when the other sectors have reached the innovations, prices will return to normal levels and hence capital has to find another place to prevail with its innovation; the overexploitation of labor in peripheral areas – here conceived as low-income countries – constitutes the means for the capital to extract further extraordinary surplus labor¹¹⁰. From this perspective, the World Bank approach towards MENA region based on the improvement of technical skills for both workers and

¹⁰⁹ The World Bank, *Middle East and North Africa: Looking Forward*, July 2nd 2021.

Accessed at: <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/mena/publication/middle-east-and-north-africa-looking-forward>> (January 2022)

¹¹⁰ M. Ceci Misoczky, G. Dornelas Camara, P. R. Zilio Abdala, *Superexplotación del trabajo y dependencia: contribuciones de los aportes de Ruy Mauro Marini en la Administración y los Estudios Organizacionales*, Administración y Desarrollo, December 2015, pp. 55-64.

enterprises, seems to be directed to side with the private capital interests of Western firms which relocate in low-income countries to increase their profits.

On the other hand, maybe due also to the relatively recent neoclassical review on the capacity of the human capital to produce positive economic externalities¹¹¹, the World Bank considers important the strengthening of the human capital through the implementation of modern education, social protection, and health systems; modernization is, of course, closely associated with a Western way of thinking.

The publication of the World Bank also stresses the importance of advancing gender equality, in order to become more inclusive economies, and of addressing fragility by providing support for refugees and host communities. However, detailed programs focusing on those objective are not supplied by the World Bank, whose main objective is admittedly not the social development.

The last objective that arises from the World Bank future strategy towards MENA region, is the promotion of green growth, tackling climate change and supporting sustainable growth, in compliance with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Finally, the article published by the World Bank in July 2021 says “the World Bank will continue to work with its clients and partners to build momentum for economic transformation that can help countries meet the aspirations of their people and unleash the MENA region’s vast potential¹¹²”. This statement clearly assumes that the economic transformation of those countries necessarily correspond to their aspirations, without even contemplate different perspectives.

Regarding instead International Monetary Fund approach vis-à-vis MENA region, it is worth mentioning a paper written, in 2021, by an IMF team of the Middle East and Central Asia Department: “Economic Governance Reforms to Support Inclusive Growth in the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia”¹¹³.

What does the term “inclusive growth”, appearing in the title of the IMF paper, mean? Referring to a definition of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and

¹¹¹ R. Lucas, *On the Mechanics of Economic Development*, Journal of Monetary Economics, 1986, pp. 3-42.

¹¹² The World Bank, *Middle East and North Africa: Looking Forward*, July 2nd 2021. Accessed at: <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/mena/publication/middle-east-and-north-africa-looking-forward>> (January 2022)

¹¹³ C. Jarvis *et al.*, *Economic Governance Reforms to Support Inclusive Growth in the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia*, Middle East and Central Asia Department, International Monetary Fund (IMF Team), pp. 1-20.

Development (OECD), inclusive growth stands for “economic growth that is distributed fairly across society and creates opportunities for all”¹¹⁴. Again, the conception of growth has here an exclusively economic meaning; moreover, GDP (or GNI) calculations, used by the Human Development Index (HDI) to measure the level of growth, do not take into consideration per capita incomes of individuals hence generating a lack of understanding about the effective distribution of wealth among people.

Returning to the IMF paper, the main governance challenges affecting MENA region are presented and shall concern, first of all, the fiscal transparency in order to guarantee a more efficient allocation of public resources; according to IMF, corruption and weak governance are responsible for the mismanagement of taxation and the consequent increase of tax evasion. Being the principles of the IMF consistent with the implementation of austerity policies – e.g. restrictive fiscal policies – the taxation system of a country must be effective and well governed.

The second challenge that the IMF wants to tackle is the improvement of the governance and accountability of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), which may produce large fiscal revenue but, in some countries, they dominate economic activity often mixing commercial and public policy goals, hence allowing conflicts of interest. Moreover – as recalled previously – SOEs may constitute a barrier to the privatization processes implemented by International Financial Institutions (IFIs) as conditionality of loans granted to countries with debt problems.

Due to the lack of transparency of public institutions in MENA region, the IMF encourages the information sharing of economic and social data in order to increase both the civil engagement and the public accountability. Within the paper, the IMF mentions a study conducted by the World Bank¹¹⁵ on the government’s interaction with business stakeholders; according to IFIs, public institutions have the duty to not hamper the economic activity, by facilitating private actors to access both data and resources they need. In fact, another important measure that the International Monetary Fund deems important is the streamlining of business regulations in order to avoid

¹¹⁴ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *What is inclusive growth?*
Accessed at: <<https://www.oecd.org/inclusive-growth/#introduction>> (January 2022)

¹¹⁵ The World Bank, The Global Indicators of Regulatory Governance project.
Accessed at: <<https://rulemaking.worldbank.org/en/rulemaking>> (January 2022)

impediments for practicing commercial activities, by also fostering private sector dynamism.

On the other hand, IMF supports the implementation of stronger regulations against corruption through some suggested measures: the participation to international initiatives against corruption, the cooperation between States and the building of a powerful financial disclosure system. However, as noted by the IMF itself, MENA countries are still in the early stages of the adoption of financial disclosure mechanisms, in comparison to the rest of the world.

Moreover, the IMF seems to overlook the possibility to implement a monitoring system that could control, from close up, that funds provided by the international institutions are being effectively used to implement pro capita incomes, social wellness, hence improving human conditions in Arab countries. It is equally true that IMF interventions are not aimed at fostering social prosperity, because instead they are only addressed to increase economic performances vis-à-vis global market.

Finally, the International Monetary Fund stresses the importance of the part played by the financial sector in supervising the economy; the central bank of each country must strengthen its governance and financial autonomy in order to pursue the ultimate goal of macroeconomic stability¹¹⁶. By improving the roles of banks, also foreign dependency will tend to increase and domestic needs will be overshadowed by international economic balance.

In dealing with reforms vis-à-vis MENA countries, the IMF takes as a positive example its efforts towards Jordan crisis under the Rapid Financing Instrument (RFI); in the following paragraph, the IMF and WB interventions in Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, and Jordan will be presented and challenged, demonstrating that, in most cases, those programs had a negative influence on the domestic socio-economic situations of the target countries.

¹¹⁶ C. Jarvis *et al.*, *Economic Governance Reforms to Support Inclusive Growth in the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia*, Middle East and Central Asia Department, International Monetary Fund (IMF Team), pp. 1-20.

2.3. “Western” interventionism towards MENA countries: case-study and datasets

In the following subsections, some case study regarding International Financial Institutions interventions in Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, and Jordan will be provided. The report will follow an historical path, starting from 1960s until today, in order to better understand both causes and effects of IFIs actions in those countries. Regarding Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco, already mentioned in the previous chapter when dealing with the Arab Spring, the relationship between IFIs, governments, and social discontent, will be examined, considering both the period before and after the Arab Spring.

Instead, the case of Jordan will be studied for two different reasons: first, to understand and challenge the IMF positive considerations of its intervention as crisis manager in the country and, second, to briefly analyze how the EU and the IMF have responded to the immigration wave, occurred right after the Arab Spring, from Syria to Jordan.

2.3.1. IFIs actions and impacts in Egypt

International Financial Institutions started operating in MENA region during 1960s promoting, through the use of conditionality, a private sector-led economy and, from 1980s, an increasingly deregulated and market integrated system. The most commonly used means through which IFIs intervene are loans, financial supervision, and technical assistance.

After ten years from the 2011 Arab Spring, there still are some outstanding issues which affect the socio-economic stability of North Africa and Middle East: the presence of a weak middle-class that is steadily declining, a consequently growing wealth gap between rich and poor people, and a widely spread sense of being left behind in an increasingly globalized economy.

According to some scholars such as David Harvey, Dani Rodrik and Joseph Stiglitz¹¹⁷, neoliberal policies implemented by IFIs have hampered indigenous development of countries, eroding social welfare and empowering private actors. As a consequence, the

¹¹⁷ T. Radwan, *The impact and influence of International Financial Institutions on the Middle East and North Africa*, Friederich Ebert Stiftung, Tunis, Tunisia, 2020, pp. 6-11.

interventions carried out by international institutions may have initiated a wealth transfer process with direction from the lower to the upper classes, worsening the situation of a regional context already marked by the absence of equal opportunity.

After the 2008 crisis and the 2011 Arab uprisings, International Financial Institutions have changed their perspective – at least on the paper – renewing the interventionism in MENA countries, but implementing a new approach, the so-called “good governance agenda”. Even if the IMF and the World Bank referred to themselves as ‘apolitical entities’, they have attempted to introduce more holistic economic trends including also investments in human development; IFIs have started dealing with equitable redistribution, inclusive growth, transparency, and accountability. In fact, in the previously analyzed paper of the IMF on the new strategy vis-à-vis MENA region, the objectives that have to be pursued to increase governance are among those just mentioned.

However, given the fact that that the International Financial Institutions have always interposed economic and financial aims to other actions, it seems slightly complicated that they actually succeed to pursue socio-political stability objectives; in the IMF paper, in fact, all the measures outlined are strictly connected with economic and business aims. Moreover, the lack of emphasis perceived by IFIs in pursuing these new objectives, allows government officials to prioritize traditional neoliberal policies over vague social justice dispositions¹¹⁸.

It is worth, therefore, mentioning some cases of borrower countries, in MENA region, who have obtained loans or financial assistance from the IFIs, in order to understand whether they succeed in achieving socio-economic recovery or have worsened their internal situations.

Starting from IFIs interventions in Egypt¹¹⁹, current agreements will be presented in order to understand if, after loans provided, this country has succeeded in achieving an economic recovery. In November 2016, Egypt signed an IMF Stand-By Agreement of \$12 billion loan in change for some monetary and fiscal policies to be implemented within the country, with the aim of reducing its high budget deficit.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *ivi*, pp. 12-25.

Apparently, in 2019 Egypt was appearing as one of the best performing market economies; unfortunately the macroeconomic stabilization, through the implementation of restrictive fiscal and monetary policies, led the country to cope with high social costs. According to both al-Sisi government and the IMF, those reforms were necessary in order to achieve the economic recovery, but the social gap was actually increasing; a rise in poverty rate from 27.8% in 2015 to 32% in 2018 was recorded¹²⁰.

The International Monetary Fund reforms implemented in Egypt do not appear to have addressed the long-term causes of both socioeconomic underdevelopment and recurrent financial unbalances, hence generating the continuous re-emergence of inequalities, social exclusion, and poverty.

IFIs interventions may only have an impact on short-term recovery of Egypt, due to a continued dependence on external borrowing and to the growth in non-tradable and non-productive sectors. In fact, manufacturing and agricultural sectors did not have contributed to economic growth, highlighting the poor conditions of the tradable sector; the reasons behind such situation are strictly connected with the effects of structural adjustment programs.

In order to decrease the budget deficit, IFIs often advise to devalue the currency and to increase the interest rates of banks, leading to the raising of production costs and to the spreading of inflationary tendencies. These measures further depress the internal economy – especially manufacturing and agricultural sectors – while empowering central banks; in fact, the foreign reserves held by the Central Bank of Egypt increased by \$45 billion in 2019, in comparison with the situation before signing the last deal with the IMF – in 2016 foreign reserves only grew by \$15 billion¹²¹. It is also noticeable that gas and oil sectors – thanks to the discoveries in the Mediterranean – and the tourism industry – due to the depreciation of the Egyptian pound that made Egypt a cheaper destination – have grown since 2016. However, these improvements only partially constitute sources of growth, on the ground of the unstable regional context of Egypt.

¹²⁰ Ahram Online, *32.5 percent of Egyptians live below poverty line: CAPMAS*, 30 July 2019
Accessed at: <<https://english.ahram.org.eg/%20NewsContent/3/12/341838/Business/Economy/-percent-of-Egyptians-live-below-poverty-line-CAPM.aspx>> (January 2022)

¹²¹ The World Bank, *Egypt Economic Monitor, From Floating to Thriving: Taking Egypt's Exports to A New Level*, Washington, D.C.: the World Bank Group, July 2019.
Accessed at: <<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/260061563202299626/pdf/Egypt-Economic-Monitor-FromFloating-to-Thriving-Taking-Egypt's-Exports-to-New-Levels.pdf>> (January 2022)

It can therefore be said that the economic recovery of Egypt, following interventions by the IFIs, is very partial and, to some extent, illusory; the IMF has boosted the perpetuation of social inequalities, while strengthening banks and few other non-tradable sectors which, in a precarious socio-economic apparatus, may not be constructive for the achievement of internal growth and progress¹²².

2.3.2. IMF, WB and EU interventions in Tunisia

Talking about Tunisia, instead, it seems important to begin by underlining the existence of a cooperation between IFIs and the EEC – later the EU – in dealing with Tunisian economy. In 1969 the EEC signed an association agreement with Tunisia allowing for duty-free exports of Tunisian industrial goods towards Europe; in the meanwhile, the World Bank provided loans – period between 1966 and 1970s – to promote the Tunisian private sector.

In 1972, the World Bank started contemplating a new strategy in favor of a neoliberal approach through the reduction of government intervention, by lightening the administrative control and reinforcing the support for the private sector. Shortly after, in 1976, the EEC signed a cooperation agreement with Tunisia; this process of liberalization, at the hands of both the WB and the EEC, was funded by the EEC development funds.

The first IMF Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) started in 1986 and ended in 1992, but already in 1983 both the IMF and the WB had pressured Tunisia to increase bread prices and to reduce public spending; after the decision of the government to rise costs and to reduce subsidies, people rebelled against these measures with a consequent violent State's repression. It may be assumed that, from 1986, Tunisian economic decision-making is highly influenced by international institutions.

Between 1986 and 1987, the IMF provided “sectoral adjustment” loans for \$150 million; the conditionality attached to the borrowing was linked to the progressive privatization of the agricultural production; the consequence was that small farmers were sidelined in order to favor the interests of large landowners. In fact, between 1970

¹²² T. Radwan, *The impact and influence of International Financial Institutions on the Middle East and North Africa*, Friederich Ebert Stiftung, Tunis, Tunisia, 2020, pp. 13-25.

and 2010, farmers have remained landless and unemployed causing a drastic decline – more than one third – of the population living in rural areas.

The results of the SAPs of the IMF in 1980s were assessed by the IMF itself, which stated that positive effects could be noticed in the reduction of the budget deficit and in the fact that the inflation rate that was kept under control – decreasing from 10% in 1987 to 3% in 1993¹²³. However, during 1980s, inequalities sharply increased: from 1983 to 1993, average real wages decreased by 11%, and the rural-urban divide widened showing that poverty rates in rural areas were five times higher than in urban centers. A Tunisian report carried out in 1992 clearly assessed that relative poverty had grown as a result of SAPs.

While the IMF loans were interrupted from 1992 to 2013, the World Bank interventions were continuing, lending from \$250 to \$400 million per year and binding Tunisia to implement privatization of mechanical manufacturing, agribusiness and transports sectors. In fact, Tunisian government, in 1997, declared its intention to achieve the privatization of municipal services.

Meanwhile, Tunisia signed, in 1995, an Association Agreement with the EU aiming at gradually removing all tariffs. As evidence of the indirect collaboration between the EU and IFIs, it appears appropriate to mention the fact that, between 1996 and 2000, both the World Bank and the EU granted Tunisia \$2.5 million in order to empower the industrial sector and realize the objective of a free trade area between the country and the EU. However, those measures had a significant impact on imports from the EU, but did not increase export from Tunisia to the EU; moreover, after the borrowing, the country lost 55% of its industrial base.

The International Monetary Fund resumed its interventions in Tunisia through a Stand-By Agreement between 2013 and 2015; the government signed the deal without the consent of the Tunisia National Elected Assembly. This event clearly shows that, as Noam Chomsky noted, IMF conditionality are more inclined to be accepted in a non-democratic environment – even if, Tunisia is a *de iure* democracy.

After the government had passed a law which granted more “independence” to the Central Bank of Tunisia, the IMF approved, in 2017, an Extended Fund Facility loan of

¹²³ Trading Economics, Tunisia inflation rate (historical), 2019.

Accessed at: <<https://tradingeconomics.com/tunisia/inflation-cpi>> (January 2022)

\$2.9 billion. The law clearly stated that the main objective of the Central Bank of Tunisia was to maintain the stability of prices, abandoning the previous goal of the steadiness of the currency; this measure led to the freedom of devaluating the dinar.

Socioeconomic indicators show negative performance on the impacts of recent IFIs influence: first of all, dinar depreciation has led to an increased inflation (rose by 7%) and, as a consequence, 1.8 million Tunisian households are currently living in debts¹²⁴. Second, the increased costs of imports have a negative effect on both consumers and local business; moreover, unemployment remains high and, as a consequence, migration and brain drain increase.

Finally, the EU and Tunisia are negotiating a new agreement on the liberalization of both services and agriculture (ALECA – Accord de Libre Echange Complet et Approfondi), which has led to the spreading of social unrest against neoliberal policies; with the hashtag *Fech Nstanneu* – what are we waiting for? – people are rebelling to block ALECA¹²⁵.

Currently, Tunisia is experiencing a dramatic socio-economic situation due also to the continued dependence on IFIs loans; according to the budget law of 2021, Tunisia has to plug a financial hole of 9.7 billion dinars of deficit (2.9 billion euro), to which is added the repayment of 6 billion dinars of foreign debt, and 5 billion of domestic debt – for a total of 20 billion dinars, around 6.2 billion euro.

In order to ease the debt, the president Kais Saied considers that the only alternative possible is to fall back on other IMF loans, without considering that structural adjustment reforms and conditionality, as demonstrated before, further depress the economy, increasing both the domestic debt – e.g. low GDP due to higher rates of unemployment (18.5%) and poverty – and the foreign indebtedness, through the constant repayment of previous loans¹²⁶. Thus, Tunisia find itself in a condition of perpetual dependence on international institutions.

¹²⁴ Institut National de la Consommation, *Premiers résultats d'une enquête sur l'endettement des ménages tunisiens*, 15 April 2019.

Accessed at: <shorturl.at/FGHR9> (January 2022)

¹²⁵ T. Radwan, *The impact and influence of International Financial Institutions on the Middle East and North Africa*, Friederich Ebert Stiftung, Tunis, Tunisia, 2020, pp.26-40.

¹²⁶ A. Poletti, *Tunisia: i danni politici e sociali di un modello economico distorto*, OASIS, Medio Oriente e Africa, 15th December 2021. Accessed at: <<https://www.oasiscenter.eu/it/tunisia-i-danni-politici-e-sociali-di-un-modello-economico-distorto>> (January 2022)

2.3.3. Morocco and International Financial Institutions

Three phases of IFIs interventionism could be identified when examining the relationship between these organizations and Morocco; the first period of economic assistance dates back to 1964 and 1965, when the country was experiencing several financial crisis and IFIs intervened to restore the Moroccan balance of payments.

Between 1983 and 1993, Morocco endured the second package of measures which affected the country's economic and social structures, while in 2012 the third period of SAPs began, lasting until 2018, which was characterized by austerity policies aiming at contracting the public spending in order to reduce the burden of the foreign debt.

About the second phase of IFIs interventionism, it is worth recalling that Morocco, during late 1970s, went through several financial crisis due to both internal reasons – the growth model didn't seem suited for the country – and external factors tied to fluctuations in the international oil market and the unexpected growth of US interest rates.

When, in 1983, the IMF intervened, conditioning a series of economic reforms, it only focused on internal factors while neglecting all external reasons that had brought Morocco to fall into a financial crisis. The reforms encouraged by the IMF aimed at liberalizing the Moroccan economy, privatizing State Ownership Enterprises (SOEs), and adopting restrictive fiscal and monetary policies – e.g. tax and public sector reforms. SAPs of 1980s resulted in a sharp decrease in macroeconomic unbalances, but, during that period, Morocco registered decreasing levels of GDP, not exceeding 3.2% per annum, and reaching a level of 2.29% between 1987 and 1993. The demographic growth rate (2.2%) was almost equal to the GDP level, bringing the country closer to the economic stagnation. The slowdown in GDP growth is attributable to the decreasing in public spending; the lack of domestic investment, to promote the macroeconomic stability, meant that needs of citizens were not considered priorities and that internal growth was not adequately pushed, causing not negligible social issues – e.g. increasing unemployment and poverty, deteriorating purchasing power.

During 1980s and 1990s, high illiteracy rates and low levels of schooling were recorded in Morocco and such poverty affected more women than men, highlighting marked gender differences as forms of social exclusion: women receiving school education were 51.1% in 1997, while in rural areas only 25% of females were schooled. Levels of

illiteracy were even higher; 87% of women in rural areas, and 43.7% in urban centers, could not neither read nor write¹²⁷.

Moreover, the IMF intervention of 1980s and 1990s, by reason of a contraction in public spending, did not even push private investments, which were decreasing from 11.8% to 11.4%.

Instead, for the period 1994-2008, the IMF role was limited to the monitoring function – article IV of the IMF agreement – consisting in the IMF recommendation to implement some economic policies within the country; an IMF report of 2001 underlined the necessity for Morocco to maintain macroeconomic stability, liberalize international trade, strengthen the finance industry, and to control government finance¹²⁸.

Actually, between 2000 and 2009, Morocco experienced an increasing in growth rates (5.1%) due to both positive global conditions and domestic factors; the government was starting to invest in public works and to grant subsidies for fuel and food. The IMF was not satisfied with the decision of rising public spending since, in its views, the government had instead to withdraw money from citizens, through taxation, in order to restore the public debt account.

However, the economic growth experimented by Morocco in the first decade of the 21st century, was a sectoral economic development, which interested only one part of the society – élites and middle classes – showing the structural defects of Moroccan society (e.g. corruption and nepotism). On the other hand, IFIs have not addressed those problems when tackling economic situation in Morocco; those organizations, particularly the IMF, did not consider issues like equal opportunity, or social protection as growth factors.

Even after the Arab uprisings of 2011, the IMF still considers macroeconomic indicators as having positive impact on inclusive growth; the new set of SAPs and austerity policies of the IMF, began in 2012 and lasted until 2020, has focused on the reduction of fiscal deficit (to 3%) and the subsequent improved efficiency of public spending – through the reduction of subsidies – the empowerment of the Moroccan Central Bank, and the temporary maintenance of a fixed exchange rate.

¹²⁷ L.H. Skalli, *Women and Poverty in Morocco: The Many Faces of Exclusion*, *Feminist Review*, 2001, pp. 73-89.

¹²⁸ IMF Morocco, *2001 Article IV Consultation-Staff Report; Public Information Notice; and Statement by the Executive Director for Morocco*. IMF Country Report No. 01/ 205, 2001.

Accessed at: <<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2001/cr01205.pdf>> (January 2022)

Due to the contraction of public spending, GDP fell from 29.8% in 2012 to 24% in 2018, as a consequence growth rates have decreased by approximately 3% (from 4.5% in 2013 to 1.2% in 2016). Moreover, unemployment increased from 8.9% in 2011 to 10.2% in 2017; young people are the most affected category by unemployment.

The overall assessment of IFIs programs in Morocco have shown the failure of the neoliberal model on several fronts. From an economic perspective, the openness of the market has caused a decline in Morocco's competitiveness and a consequent incapacity to increase the overall production; the country has witnessed an early deindustrialization even before having experienced an industrialization phase.

From the social justice perspective, international institutions failed to address the challenge of human development; social inequalities, unemployment, or social exclusion remain a pivotal point that need to be dealt in order to increase human conditions hence encouraging a sustainable growth.

Finally, from the political point of view, the social discontent has been demonstrated through riots and uprisings – even after 2011 – but the Morocco's political regime of constitutional monarchy remains unaffected by these unrests.

Even if it seems manifest that the overall results of IFIs interventionism in Morocco have had a negative impact on various aspects of country's society, such organizations have only rhetorically changed their perspective after 2011 Arab Spring; in fact, for the period 2012-2020, the IMF has continued to implement neoliberal structural reforms and austerity policies, always giving priority to macroeconomic imbalances¹²⁹.

2.3.4. The case of Jordan: statist development model vs. neoliberal economic growth

The International Monetary Fund, as already noted, considers its intervention in Jordan as positive examples of crisis management; in fact, due to the actions and programs implemented by IFIs in Jordan, macroeconomic indicators show positive performances – thanks also to the increase in Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) towards the country.

¹²⁹ T. Radwan, *The impact and influence of International Financial Institutions on the Middle East and North Africa*, Friederich Ebert Stiftung, Tunis, Tunisia, 2020, pp.42-60.

However, social discontent is increasing since neoliberal policies have improved inequalities and poverty, sacrificing social wellness for the purpose of increasing international market competitiveness and balance.

Between 1940s and mid-1980s¹³⁰, Jordan was implementing a statist development model characterized by a massive State intervention in economy; the government considered necessary to invest in the public sector in order to achieve growth. During those years, Jordan increased the government spending, investing in both urban infrastructures and education and providing social security to the middle-class, so as to allow the educated urban population to work in the public sector. By late 1990s, there was an increased number of both public and private universities and colleges.

This statist development model proved successful until mid-1980s, recording several socioeconomic gains, both in urban and in rural areas; in addition to the government intervention in both economy and society, this approach was also characterized by a tendency to protectionism against liberal trade.

However, some resources – e.g. oil – had to be imported from abroad, showing a certain degree of foreign trade dependency; the global increase in oil prices led to a raise on both import and transportation costs. In addition, the development model used in Jordan began to show its limits; the debt was dramatically increasing and the government was in difficulty, unaware of how manage the crisis.

Therefore, after having experienced several debt crisis, Jordan found itself forced to fall back on IFIs support, throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. The IMF conditioned some reforms to the loans granted: firstly, it advised to increase costs of basic goods (food and energy), then to decrease the government spending, while raising taxes on cigarettes and beverages. Jordan government adopted these measures and the result was a decrease in living standard; in fact, during this period, an increase in goods prices, a decline in real wages and in subsidies were recorded.

Progressively, the IMF began to introduce new conditionality regarding fiscal consolidation and deficit reduction; the liberalization of the exchange rate to foster exports, the reduction of interest rates, the deregulation of the banking system to boost the private sector and, as consequence, the selling of State Ownership Enterprises.

¹³⁰ T. Radwan, *The impact and influence of International Financial Institutions on the Middle East and North Africa*, Friederich Ebert Stiftung, Tunis, Tunisia, 2020, pp. 61-71.

According to the IMF, the liberalization of trade was one of the most necessary measure that Jordan had to implement to improve BoP and accumulation of foreign reserves¹³¹.

Moreover, during the early 2000s, Jordan signed several Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with the United States (2001), with Canada (2012), and an association agreement with the European Union (2012).

At the dawn of 2008, Jordan registered its highest per capita income (6.5% GDP growth per year), but after the financial crisis the GDP dramatically decreased, reaching 2.3%; thereafter, Jordan GDP experienced a continued decline. However, IFIs considered Jordan crisis management as a positive example of newly liberalized country; it is correct that, before 2008, GDP has showed positive performances, but it is equally true that growth experienced in that period was not inclusive and neglect all social aspects related to wellness of citizens. In fact, after the 2008 financial crisis, the IMF changed, at least theoretically, its approach in order to address also social inequality and implement redistribution policies.

In 2012, Jordan signed an IMF Stand-By Agreement for a sum of \$2 billion. But, after 2011 Arab Spring, the country was facing a migration crisis; a crowd of Syrian refugees migrated towards Jordan and the country needed more loans to create jobs for them. Therefore, in 2016, the IMF intervened again to provide lending to Jordan¹³²; the conditionality attached to the borrowing focused on the decreasing of the public spending, in order to pull out money resources that would have been allocated to restore the debt. The goal of the International Monetary Fund was to reduce the public debt from 94% to 77% by 2021.

In 2016, the European Commission supplied two packages of EUR 200 million of medium-term borrowing for complementing both IMF and WB loans; the European Union also provided EUR 1.13 billion to assist Syrian refugees. The EU funds were aimed at both restoring public deficit and supporting the liberalization process.

The EU and US financial assistance was implicitly connected with the expectation that Jordan would have continued to implement both SAPs and austerity policies suggested by the IMF.

¹³¹ J. Harrigan, H. El-Said, and C. Wang, *The IMF and the World Bank in Jordan: A case of over optimism and elusive growth*, Review of International Organizations, 2006, pp. 263-292.

Accessed at: <<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11558-006-9490-8>> (January 2022)

¹³² K. H. Sowell, *Jordan is Sliding Toward Insolvency*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2016.

Accessed at: <<http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/63061>> (January 2022)

Currently, Jordan is facing a dramatic social crisis; corruption continues to spread, inequalities are rising and huge disparities between urban and rural communities are increasingly making themselves felt.

Even if the IMF have apparently introduced some social measures within its programs – tackling inclusive growth, inequality, education and health – it remains anchored to the idea that the private sector has to be considered as the main agent to provide social justice. Moreover, the 2016 lending of the IMF was again focused on the implementation of restrictive fiscal and monetary policies; it might indicate that the International Monetary Fund only rhetorically commit itself to introduce other policies related to social wellness, while leaving the Jordanian government to prioritize fiscal consolidation over social justice¹³³.

¹³³ T. Radwan, *The impact and influence of International Financial Institutions on the Middle East and North Africa*, Friederich Ebert Stiftung, Tunis, Tunisia, 2020, pp. 61-71.

Chapter III

Alternatives to Eurocentric development in North Africa and Middle East: perspectives and obstacles

3.1. Critics to the concept of modern development

3.1.1. Between Western universality and modernity values: supremacy of exclusion over inclusion

During 1980s, after the neo-liberal shift of the international economic policy, some scholars and activists began to criticize the concept of development, understood as an industrial, and market-oriented, growth model. Those scholars believed that the process of achieving progress was clearly showing its limits: it was not anymore about catching up the so-called ‘developing countries’, ensuring them an overall guarantee to achieve growth, rather, the development technique implemented was actually widening the gap between poor and rich countries. Moreover, according to these critics, the development policies adopted by both international organizations and influential States seemed to have as one of its objective the elimination of cultural diversity for the benefits of Western institutions, which promoted their values, both socio-political and economic, as universal ones¹³⁴.

¹³⁴ A. Ziai, *Exploring Post-development, theory and practice, problems and perspectives*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York 2007, pp. 3-6.

In 1992, *The Development Dictionary: a Guide to Knowledge as Power*, a groundbreaking book that has become a 'classic' in the field of development studies, was published by Wolfgang Sachs, a German academic and environmentalist; in this work, the leading experts in the sector have examined the key concepts of development, also providing critics and highlighting its contradictions. The analyses supplied by these scholars are focused on the concept of 'economism' as dominant over the approach to growth; in the light of development methods that have been established since second the post-war period, some development experts have argued that these approaches have excessively conditioned the economic policies of the States, by also modeling and universalizing our way of thinking into one unique conception of the world.

Thus, the idea of 'deconstructing' the concept of development began to arise during those years, to refine over the past two decades: it basically consisted of removing the development discourse, as conceived by most, from the center of the organizational structure of social life, hence detaching from the modernist way of living, in order to reassess priorities and to open a way for alternatives able to respect peoples, identities and nature.

In criticizing the current world order, post-developmentalists move from the examination of the notion of 'modernity', as the prevailing world-view that emerged in Europe during the Renaissance to consolidate itself by the late 18th century. For the purpose of the present analysis, it seems worth mentioning some of the principal characteristics of 'modernity' as way of life: first of all, the conception of individual as private owner, independent from the collectivity, representing the center of the universe. This current of thought is known as anthropocentrism and has its foundations on some dualistic ontological categories: the mismatch between object and subject, between mind and body, masculine and feminine, civilized and barbarian. The socio-political implications of this anthropocentric attitude, together with a increasingly boosted globalization, are, among the others, the political liberalism, the achievement of free-market economy, and a consequently growing tendency towards liberal democracy. From here, comes also the conception of 'universalism' as the idea that humans all live in a single world, the values of which can be unified under the same socio-political and

economic instruments of power¹³⁵. ‘Universalism’ differs here from the attitude towards ‘cosmopolitanism’, in that the former has been concretized into the supremacy of Western science, knowledge, and power centers as unique valid forms of social construction, while the latter is, in this specific context, intended more as a mental attitude to feel a member of the same world and to internalize the conception of brotherhood on egalitarian basis. In fact, proponents of post-development discourse, but also environmental activists, explain this dichotomy under the slogan ‘*think globally, act locally*’; having cosmopolitan mental attitudes does not automatically exclude sustaining principles of self-determination, emancipation, or local governance, rather all these features should be intertwined in order to realize what post-developmentalists call ‘a pluriverse’ of different worlds under the same universe.

Having briefly explained the main features of the conception of modernity, all that remains, before entering in the deep of the post-development discourse, is to try to understand the current relationship between modernity and development in this wave of globalization. In doing so, it seems necessary to mention the position of one of the driving force behind the World Social Forum¹³⁶, the academic Boaventura de Sousa Santos, to determine whether globalization is the last stage of capitalism, or rather if it is the beginning of something different. According to Santos, there is a lack of ability to think of anything else than modern solutions to modern issues; in fact, the Portuguese scholar points out that present history is actually moving beyond the benchmark of the modernity both epistemologically – the dominance of modern science is weakening to leave room for different forms of knowledge – and socio-politically, in the sense that emerging alternative patterns, like grassroots movements, are arising, placing themselves in open contrast with the perspective of global capitalism.

Unfortunately, however, what stops the transition towards post-modern forms is the constant tension between two features typical of modernity’s dichotomy: the social regulation and the social emancipation that, since they do not match each other, create imbalances between expectations and experience. Social regulation can be defined as

¹³⁵ A. Kothari *et al.*, *Pluriverse, A Post-Development Dictionary*, Tulika Books, Authorsupfront, 2019 India, pp. XXI-XXV *Introduction*.

¹³⁶ The World Social Forum refers to an annual meeting of civil society organizations that share the same counter-hegemonic attitudes towards globalization. One of the objectives of this forum is to find, and consequently build, alternatives to the current neoliberal system. The first session of this meeting dates back to 2001.

Information accessed at: <<https://transformadora.org/en/about/principles>> (January 2022)

“the set of norms, institutions and practices through which expectations are stabilized”¹³⁷; nowadays, it can be inferred that it represents the relationship between state, market, and community. In this context, social emancipation, instead of being positively and constructively linked to social regulation, finds itself in the position to challenge the existing order to make its influence felt. Hence an example of a modern problem for which there are no modern solutions; Santos considers necessary the need to resort to a post-modern option that can detach itself from social regulations belonging to modernist paradigm.

Thus, Santos believes that this last wave of globalization may represent the beginning of something new, a new pattern where the so-called ‘social fascism’, which characterized the current global socio-economic policy, will be definitively abandoned. When referring to the term ‘social fascism’, one wants to emphasize the structural supremacy of exclusion over inclusion typical of contemporary world order: one need only think of state or not state-actors which, if powerful enough, can decide the tide of weaker actors, or of the so-called ‘financial fascism’ of the International Financial Institutions – a topic copiously dealt in the previous chapter.

This regime of exclusion, according to Santos, seems to coexists with the structure of democratic societies, and the aggrieved party appears to be the so-called Third World – predominantly countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America¹³⁸.

Having illustrated the departure point for the post-development critique to the concepts of both modernity and development, it is worth clarifying the significance of some terms that will be used in the following paragraphs. First and foremost, ‘Global North’ and ‘Global South’ will be recurring concepts within the present analysis: the former referring to both Western historically hegemonic nations and non-Western colonized but powerful ruling elites, while the latter stands for both exploited ethnic, or social minorities in strong countries and historically colonized weaker nations¹³⁹. Thus, the terms ‘Global South’ and ‘Global North’ are not merely geographic concepts, they are purely used to distinguish ruling countries from the traditionally exploited ones.

¹³⁷ A. Ziai, *Exploring Post-development, theory and practice, problems and perspectives*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York 2007, p. 27.

¹³⁸ *ivi*, p. 28

¹³⁹ A. Kothari et al., *Pluriverse, A Post-Development Dictionary*, Tulika Books, Authorsupfront, 2019 India, p. XXII, *Introduction*.

Finally, it may be useful to define what is normally meant by the term ‘Eurocentrism’ conceived as the supremacy of the Western culture and society over the others; as a consequence, the Eurocentric frame of thought considers both the other cultures and civilizations on the basis of its own criteria, namely the coherence of other systems with principles and values established in European history. In this sense the Eurocentrism has played a significant supporting role on the cultural ground in the era of colonialism and imperialism. Nowadays, it is likely to reappear, albeit in new forms, in the confrontation with other cultures and civilizations favored by globalization¹⁴⁰.

3.1.2. Is development a matter of economic or political urgency in a globalized society?

Having clarified the meaning of the concepts of ‘Global North’, ‘Global South’ and ‘Eurocentrism’, one can discuss the merits of the development discourse in today’s society. In order to clarify whether the existing approach to progress is considered a matter of economic or political urgency, it will be necessary to examine both the historical roots of ‘Global North’ behavior towards ‘Global South’, as well as the current strategies of encouraging global development.

In fact, colonial legacies of Western powers and features of today’s globalization are strictly intertwined when dealing with the development project encouraged and implemented by Western countries and international organizations.

When examining the development paradigm, post-development theorists use to refer to the Truman’s speech of 1949 as the first time in which Africa, Asia, and Latin America were defined ‘underdeveloped areas’ requiring aid to achieve progress. It was in that period of time that the decolonization process began: with the independence of Syria and Lebanon from France, between 1943 and 1946, and the autonomy of India, in 1947, ‘Global South’ entered a period of activism of indigenous movements that wished to reach independence from Western colonial powers. During 1950s, most countries of northern Africa achieved independence; Libya gained independence from Italy in 1951, the Egyptian revolution of 1952 ended the period of Great Britain’s influence on Egypt while, in 1956, both Morocco and Tunisia conquered independence from France.

¹⁴⁰ J. Sundberg, *Definition of Eurocentrism*, International Encyclopedia of Human Geogaphy, 2009. Accessed at: <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/eurocentrism>> (January 2022)

It seems thus clear that there might be a connection between the US and European plan to development aid and the decolonization process that was taking place in 1940s and 1950s; according to post-development scholars, the strategy of encouraging progress in ‘Global South’ countries represented a means for maintaining a kind of dominance over former colonies. The hegemony would no longer be political, rather it would be of economic and ideological nature¹⁴¹; in fact, the conception of development aid has originated in the ‘Global North’ as an instrument, used by powerful countries, to justify its economic and geopolitical expansion, while encouraging the rise of an era characterized by new ideals and common values within old hegemonic structures. In this regard, it seems worth mentioning the Karl Marx’s reasoning about the fact that when a new society emerged from inside the old, it is normal that it brings along many deficiencies that were characteristics of the old system¹⁴².

But, what exactly are the features of this new global society? And what is the connection between colonial legacy, globalization, and development aid?

Dealing with the first question, it is appropriate to refer to the current wave of globalization started during 1980s; taking the foundations from the previous wave – between 1950s and 1980s – characterized by the society of mass consumption, the last phase of globalization is founded on neo-liberal economic principles, enforced at the international level and based upon the foreign trade, as instruments to achieve growth indiscriminately in all countries, without taking into account the specificities of the various nations. From 1980s onwards, the UN, with the help of IFIs, has changed approach towards the so-called developing countries in order to pursue a strategy of ‘poverty alleviation’, without even attempting to find the causes of ‘Global South’ deprivation in the accumulation-driven economy of Western countries¹⁴³.

Since then, economic growth was considered as a necessary step to achieve progress; as already explained in the previous chapter, the 1980s were the years in which the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) began to be used by the International Monetary Fund. This kind of financial assistance was aimed at reducing the foreign debt of recipient countries, while restricting the public spending and subsequently increasing

¹⁴¹ A. Kothari et al., *Pluriverse, A Post-Development Dictionary*, Tulika Books, Authorsupfront, 2019 India, pp. 34-37.

¹⁴² *ivi*, pp. XXIV, *Introduction*.

¹⁴³ *ivi*, pp. XXV, *Introduction*.

taxes; moreover, funds were provided to countries in order to empower private actors and favor the increase of foreign trade. According to this pattern, all countries, sooner or later, would have succeeded in achieving high standard of living.

Thus, it might be inferred that development cooperation is characterized by two implicit features: first, the capitalist rhetoric of economic efficiency, productivity and consumption as the ultimate objectives for all peoples and, second, the moral duty of ‘developed countries’ to provide assistance to the ‘Global South’ in order to promote growth and progress according to the Western liberal democratic values – both economically and socio-politically. Here lies the connection between the current globalized society and the legacy of colonialism; a new era within the old colonial structures. In fact, colonial discourse could be considered as the predecessor of the development cooperation; both patterns share the conceptualization of the ‘Global South’ from a ‘Global North’ perspective¹⁴⁴.

With the turn of the new millennium, concepts like ‘green economy’ and ‘economic efficiency and sustainability’ began to spread in public debate, increasingly considered to be interrelated with the achievement of growth. The United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), within a report of preparation for Rio+20, defined the Green Economy as an important instrument to improve the human well-being and social equity, while considerably decreasing environmental hazards. The report repeatedly highlights that all living natural forms of the Earth are marketable natural capital; for this reason, it would be possible to implement strategies of ‘environmental economics’ and contributing to the reduction of pollution through systems of ‘eco-efficiency’, while continuing to produce the same amount of commodities¹⁴⁵. However, there have been empirical evidence of the fact that absolute energy and materials consumed are not reducing; historically retracing, in fact, periods of overall dematerialization usually correspond to times of economic recession¹⁴⁶.

Most recently, the so-called Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been laid down within the declaration “*Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for*

¹⁴⁴ A. Ziai, *Exploring Post-development, theory and practice, problems and perspectives*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York 2007, p. 8.

¹⁴⁵ L. Mazza and P. ten Brink, *Green Economy, Supporting briefing green economy in the European Union*, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), UNEP Division of Communications and Public Information, Nairobi May 2012.

¹⁴⁶ F. Krausmann *et al.*, *Growth in global materials use, GDP and population during the 20th century*, in *Ecological Economics* (2009), Research Gate, 2017.

Sustainable Development”; thanks to the analysis conducted by A. Kothari¹⁴⁷, a post-development scholar, some shortcomings may be observed within the document. First of all, there is a continuous focus towards economic growth as the driving force behind development – through the adoption of GDP measurement as a marker for progress – and second, the economic globalization, together with the non-regulated consumerism of today’s society, are seen as fundamental economic strategies, which unfortunately leave behind the needs of some peoples, without taking into consideration their attempts at autonomous decisions, while satisfying ‘harmful necessities’ of Global North inhabitants. Moreover, the continued subjugation to private capital prevents the democratization of economic relations (e.g. between worker and producer, or between people and environment), hence not allowing the right community control to the transparency of market rules; in fact, the current global governance system is built on a neoliberal architecture characterized by technocratic values, which promise win-win solutions, sometimes failing to take into account the structural roots of non-sustainability, poverty, or multifaceted violence. Finally, the UNEP document exalts modern science and technology as necessary drivers of growth, while ignoring the existence of ‘other’ types of knowledge; in this context, ethic, culture, and spirituality are considered submissive to the economic system¹⁴⁸.

The analysis of this declaration containing the well-known Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but also the assessment provided in the previous chapter regarding the IFIs interventions vis-à-vis low income countries, clearly demonstrate that development projects are part of an economic plan, instead of a political one. According to post-development and de-growth theorists the concepts of both ‘green growth’ and ‘economic progress’ are doing nothing more than de-politicize the development discourse, preventing the genuine and constructive political dialogue between different alternative visions of society¹⁴⁹.

While it is evident that, in the current globalized system, development is seen as a matter of economic urgency, post-development scholars claim that the global crisis –

¹⁴⁷ A. Kothari et al., *Pluriverse, A Post-Development Dictionary*, Tulika Books, Authorsupfront, 2019 India, pp. XXVI-XXVII, *Introduction*.

¹⁴⁸ *ivi*, p. XXVII, *Introduction*.

¹⁴⁹ G. Kallis, *The Degrowth Alternative*, Great Transition Initiative, Towards a Transformative Vision and Praxis, February 2015.

Accessed at: <https://www.tellus.org/pub/Kallis-The-Degrowth-Alternative.pdf> (January 2022)

involving various aspects of life on Earth – could not be managed within the existing institutional frameworks and socio-economic relations. It would be appropriate to consider transformative initiatives, able to reorganize social and power relations by questioning both the features of mainstream development discourse and its roots, originated in the slave trade between 1500s and 1700s, perpetuated during the colonial period between 1800s and 1900s, strengthened with the international ties established during the Cold War, and entrenched during the last two waves of globalization characterized by an increasingly free market, shaped by unequal exchange and dependency mechanisms at the expense of the ‘Global South’.

For the purpose of envisaging a ‘pluriverse’ of alternative worlds, it is necessary to re-politicize the social and power relations, and consequently also the concepts of ‘progress’, ‘wealth’, ‘growth’, and ‘development’, enabling the advent of a socio-cultural transformation. In the following paragraph, the post-development re-politicized society and its characteristics will be described.

3.2. ‘Post-development’: rebuild social structures

The aim of the present section is to define what, in a post-development lexicon, ‘desirable social change’ means exactly; the alternatives to the current world order exist and require spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and ethical decolonization to be reached. The most suitable starting point to conceive the existence of socio-cultural alternatives is the idea of biocivilization¹⁵⁰; this concept refers to the quest for a new civilization pattern, in which the importance of both life and ecological systems are reintegrated within the organization of society.

As already explained, both the logic of the market-oriented economy and the principle of the satisfaction of private interests should be abandoned, in order to leave room for the care of collective and individual responsibilities; a pivotal point for the achievement of biocivilization. Other important pillars which belong to this perspective are the following: take advantage of all the possibilities which arise locally, bridging them to

¹⁵⁰ A. Kothari *et al.*, *Pluriverse, A Post-Development Dictionary*, Tulika Books, Authorsupfront, 2019 India, pp. 102-104.

other levels, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity; secondly, it is important to refer to the commons¹⁵¹ – understood here as collective goods – as central elements to the social change, together with the assurance that all men and women can mutually benefit from decent work. Furthermore fundamental principles like equality, human rights, freedom, happiness, and the unobstructed realization of people’s potentialities, respecting both their will and diversities, are to be ensured.

But before realizing biocivilization, the dismantling of all preconditions, belonging to Western-centric way of life, that individuals have internalized, is considered a necessary challenge to reorganize and re-politicize socio-economic and power relations. First of all, it is advisable to rebuild, or at least restructure, the relationship between people and nature since their interaction constitutes the truest form of living, and allows the sustainability of the planet. In doing so, individuals shall abandon the rhetoric of anthropocentrism, to embrace a close connection with nature; moreover, the pursuit of social justice should be linked to the environmental protection, in such a way that the two struggles are intertwined.

It can therefore be said that individuals are not the center of the social change, but it is their life on the Earth that is the core element of the renewed society; the economy is thus to be focused on life and its fundamental values like caring, sharing, and living together. These three principles recall the concept of human responsibility; in order to have rights, it is indispensable that individuals respect the rights of others, learning to care, share, and live together, in such a way that co-responsibility is realized and human rights protected.

Another important concept that seems important to call into question is the idea of autonomy¹⁵², that today has many different meanings, from the individuals attitude towards self-ruling to the emancipator approaches adopting radical democracy and questioning the capitalist mode of production and the validity of Western modernity constructs. Thus, in order to better understand current debates, it seems worth distinguishing between three different words: *ontonomy*, *autonomy*, and *heteronomy*.

¹⁵¹ Y. Benkler, *The Political Economy of Commons*, The European Journal for the Informatics Professional, 2003, pp. 6-9.

Accessed at: [https://www.boell.org/downloads/Benkler The Political Economy of the Commons.pdf](https://www.boell.org/downloads/Benkler%20The%20Political%20Economy%20of%20the%20Commons.pdf) (January 2022)

¹⁵² A. Kothari et al., *Pluriverse, A Post-Development Dictionary*, Tulika Books, Authorsupfront, 2019 India, pp. 99-101.

The former refers to the endogenous norms of being existing everywhere, while autonomy relates to methods through which a community, or a group, shall adopt new norms; instead, heteronomy occurs when rules are enforced, through imposition, by others. For the purpose of the present analysis, it is necessary to widen the fields of ontonomy and autonomy in order to adhere to both endogenous traditional norms and new rules arising from the community.

Autonomic social and political movements, intended as being emancipator, share some pivotal points: they criticize the hierarchical and vertical characters of participatory democracies ruled by professionals and not by common people; they also challenge neo-liberal globalization and capitalism, trying to end their dependence on the market-economy while adopting the ‘principle of sufficiency’, that is to say the non-separation between means and ends, hence avoiding the logic according to which individuals are great while means to satisfy them are limited. Moreover, emancipator movements dissociate themselves from the universalism that distinguishes Western modernity; some of them may become fundamentalists, while other might experience other forms of knowledge, recognizing, from the awareness of modern constructs, their need for autonomy and independence. Finally, there are autonomic movements that support the creation of post-patriarchal societies.

Zapatista society may be a clear example of autonomous and biocivilized collectivity in which ethics and politics – and not the economy – are the core of the social life, and care for life, Mother Earth, and women are the main priorities¹⁵³.

In the following subsections, the features of reorganized social structures in one of the possible alternative worlds will be defined and studied: politics, knowledge, and economy will be dealt through a post-development perspective. The case-study that will be employed to better explain the cornerstones of an endogenously self-organized civil society, is the democratic self-administered economy of Kurdistan, in Rojava, an autonomous region – not officially recognized – of North-East Syria.

¹⁵³ A. Briy, *Zapatistas: Lessons in community self-organisation in Mexico*, openDemocracy, 25th June 2020.

Accessed at: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/democraciaabierta/zapatistas-lecciones-de-auto-organizaci%C3%B3n-comunitaria-en/> (February 2022)

3.2.1. Political system

In order to explain how post-development advocates define politics, it seems worth mentioning the conception of emancipatory policy of Serge Latouche¹⁵⁴, one of the pioneers of post-development and de-growth discourses. Emancipatory politics relates to the mutation of the collective identity of individuals within a given community, hence constituting its representation. Thus, the tasks of politics is the building of the social bond that link and constrain people within the community, enabling the radical social change.

Serge Latouche, in articulating its ideology, refers to post-Heideggerian philosophers and their conception of universality which, according to them, constitutes the source of the social bond, and which has the role of reactivating the ‘singular event of the political’. The political is thus the phenomenon that breaks the order for the purpose of conceiving another possibility of the universal, marking the creation of a new collective identity¹⁵⁵.

‘Singularity’ (i.e. what is not given) is neither a universality nor a peculiarity and it does not derives from generality (i.e. what is given), escaping from the conceptual identification of representation, hence the suspension of power. The main role of singularity is thus to ‘conquest an empty place of power’, suspending the existing order and giving rise to new relations of power – i.e. a new universality.

It might be deduced that the ‘generality’ refers to the *formal* – i.e. the existing universality – while the ‘singularity’ regards the *informal* – i.e. the possibility of a new universality. The term post-development may be conceived as the ‘moment’ of the political, in such a way that the informal is transformed into emancipation.

According to LaTouche, this process will led to the creation of a new social bond at the global level; the informal shall become the focus of the world, the new universality, in which peoples, in both developed and developing countries, turn into ‘convivial’ and ‘autonomous’ societies where a plurality of cultures coexist and respect each other.

But, what is the clear connection between universality and the construction of pluriversality? It can be argued that the universal becomes fundamental for the building

¹⁵⁴ S. Latouche, *Faut-il refuser le développement ? : essai sur l'anti-economique du tiers-monde*, PUF, Paris 1986, pp. 1061-1064.

¹⁵⁵ A. Ziai, *Exploring Post-development, theory and practice, problems and perspectives*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York 2007, pp. 63-77.

of the collective identity, but it has to be pluralized in order to achieve the condition of emancipatory politics. In fact, according to post-modern politics, the construction of a multi-polar international order seems to be a fundamental condition that ensure the existence of multiple decision-making centers. Nevertheless, this plurality of actors are not necessarily States, they could either be other types of community organs (e.g. social movements), which are not hierarchical related, being characterized by relatively horizontal power relations¹⁵⁶.

Having analyzed the process of reactivation of politics within a new system of social relations, it seems worth identifying what is the most suitable form of government that should be adopted, either locally or internationally, within a post-development society. Direct democracy thus seems the best form of government that shall help challenge the universality of the existing system, calling into question the hegemony of colonial thinking, and build a new pluralized universality by creating a set of alternatives to the prevailing order.

Since post-development approach does not conceive the existence of hierarchies within power structures, direct democracy is also suitable because it eliminates the distinction between rulers and those who are governed¹⁵⁷. In fact, this form of government is characterized by self-rule of people, who are directly and continuously involved in the tasks of government, according to a principle of political equality. Furthermore, it favors decentralization and subsidiarity, that are important features for the realization of a biocivilized society. The advocates of direct democracy, but it is better to call it 'radical democracy' for the complexity of its features and the real empowerment it creates in communities, also repudiate the condition of heteronomy, criticizing all dogmas that impose external ruling, thus limiting autonomy.

Turning to the case-study, the governance model of Rojava, the Kurdish experiment of self-administration inspired by Murray Bookchin's ideology of social ecology, is characterized by direct democracy and implies a participatory and egalitarian decision-making. The instruments, through which decisions are carried out, are communes and councils; they operate according to subsidiarity mechanisms – i.e. neighborhood, town,

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ A. Kothari *et al.*, *Pluriverse, A Post-Development Dictionary*, Tulika Books, Authorsupfront, 2019 India, pp. 154-156.

city – and dealing with various key themes – i.e. women, youth, education, ecology, economy etc. – ensuring the direct participation of all people in public life¹⁵⁸.

An important feature of Rojava self-administered society is the importance given to gender emancipation as an act of reactivation of politics, seen as a subversion to the existing order characterized by devaluation of women's knowledge and labor. Improving women's participation in both decision-making and other social and economic activities within a self-organized community, also implies challenging hegemonic ways of thinking and helping decolonizing minds; in fact, it constitutes an attempt to build different worlds that are different to the existing one. It is not just a question of gender emancipation, it is about providing equal opportunities within a new pluralized universality, outside the pattern of a capitalist society.

In Rojava, democracy belongs to all spheres of life: the economy is also organized in such a way that the needs of all are fulfilled. In the next subsection, after having illustrated the main features of the post-development economy, certain properties of the democratic economy in Kurdistan will be provided¹⁵⁹.

3.2.2. *Economic structure*

Unlike the perspective of homo oeconomicus that becomes accustomed to the world market mechanisms, the new social structures, born from the unsustainability of the Eurocentric development paradigm, should build upon new socio-economic relations founded on communality, solidarity and reciprocity¹⁶⁰.

Post-development advocates give special attention to the concept of 'commons' as social systems characterized by a commonwealth, that is to say a range of resources held in common and governed by the community itself, which is committed to the praxis of communing and respecting nature. It might be argued that all practices of human cooperation, which respect the non-hierarchy, are forms of commons.

The process through which these social systems arise refers to the subtraction of resources from capital, inserting them into collective production methods, thus creating

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *ivi*, pp. 151-153.

¹⁶⁰ A. Ziai, *Exploring Post-development, theory and practice, problems and perspectives*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York 2007, pp. 145-169.

a commonwealth characterized by participatory and democratic values, whose main objectives are the welfare of the commoners and the sustainability of the environment. The need for collective action emerges from both the neo-liberal crisis and the refusal to surrender to technological and industrial production imposed by Western countries, which unconditionally follow mainstream economic theories¹⁶¹.

The definition of ‘commons’ has been considered fundamental to investigate the matter of the ‘community economy’, seen as various types of practices that support and respect the living conditions of both humans and non-humans and which challenge the capitalist system, by referring to other types of economic models that have never been considered by the international community¹⁶². In particular, the term ‘community economy’ refers to the efforts, made by a social system, to address basic needs provision without necessarily depending on the international trade, by giving at the same time the possibility to distribute the surplus of production. As the word ‘community’ suggests, one of the fundamental aspects of this kind of socio-economic organization is the ability to cohabit and interact in order to favor ethical negotiations based upon solidarity, fair trade, community land trusts and care, sustainable consumption, community finance and ethical banking, among the others¹⁶³.

All these alternative socio-economic practices may be incorporated within the wider comprehensive concept of the social (and) solidarity economy (SSE), which does not rely on mainstream economic theories based upon the competitiveness between private actors for the objective of maximizing profits. The SSE shall ensure that nature has an active role within the economic environment, and that principles of equity, solidarity and ecological integrity obtain the primacy over profits and self-interests.

Ideologically, the SSE can operate at different levels, both internationally and locally, through international solidarity networks – such as the International Network for the promotion of the Social Solidarity Economy (RIPESS), which delineate the theoretical and practical implementation of solidarity economy – and the building of local

¹⁶¹ A. Kothari *et al.*, *Pluriverse, A Post-Development Dictionary*, Tulika Books, Authorsupfront, 2019 India, pp. 124-127.

¹⁶² *ivi*, pp. 127-129.

¹⁶³ J.K Gibson-Graham, J. Cameron, S. Healy, *Take back the economy: An Ethical Guide For Transforming Our Communities*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 2013, pp. 125-135.

ecosystems and communities – which are hands-on experiments of alternative socio-economic practices¹⁶⁴.

As already explained, the solidarity economy shall aim at challenging the mainstream development discourse that sees non-capitalist mode of production as unproductive and backward. According to post-development advocates, priorities and features of economy should be reassessed, as they were in pre-capitalist societies: from the global to the localized, from the privatized to the communal, from the monetized as a *sine qua non* condition to the non necessarily monetized, from the mass-production to the rediscovery of the artisanal one. As the post-development scholar Anup Dash underlines, the economy should be seen as ‘the ways people organize themselves collectively to make a living and the ways a society organizes itself to (re)produce its material life and well-being¹⁶⁵’.

Returning to Rojava self-administered community, it seems important to mention some of the characteristics of the democratic economy in Kurdistan in order to better envisage how a social solidarity production system works in particular. A democratic economy refers to a non-accumulationist economic apparatus, where activities are directed towards the fulfillment of the needs of everyone, thus focusing on the priority of use-values over exchange-values and guaranteeing equal and collective access to resources such as land, water, and food. In doing so, Kurdish democratic economy is committed to reorganize the communal agricultural production on the basis of population’s needs, to realizing social justice among inhabitants, empowering women and socializing women’s unpaid activities through the building of common spaces – e.g. communal kitchens – and organizing local self-administration of resources through the creation of cooperatives – e.g. energy associations, or agro-processing cooperatives.

One of the most important missions accomplished by Rojava self-administered social economy is the granting of free land access to landless families, through a collective production system and the provision of technical support; this is a clear example of solidarity, one of the cornerstones of post-development economic structure.

¹⁶⁴ A. Kothari *et al.*, *Pluriverse, A Post-Development Dictionary*, Tulika Books, Authorsupfront, 2019 India, pp. 311-314.

¹⁶⁵ A. Dash, *Towards an Epistemological Foundation for Social and Solidarity Economy*, Draft paper for UNRISD Conference on ‘Potential and Limits of Social and Solidarity Economy, May 2013 Geneva, p. 11. Accessed at: [https://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/%28httpAuxPages%29/2DE9BF410E3B8F94C1257CA600310304/\\$file/OP3Dash.pdf](https://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/%28httpAuxPages%29/2DE9BF410E3B8F94C1257CA600310304/$file/OP3Dash.pdf)> (February 2022)

However, certain loopholes in the Social Solidarity Economy remain: one of these gaps refers to the challenge of the relationship between non-accumulationist production and the fulfillment of population's needs. This issue refers in particular to the quantity of surplus that can be 'accumulated' to satisfy people's primary necessities; in fact, it is not always possible to democratically deliberate the exact amount of surplus production that can be exchanged, thus risking to create inequalities among individuals.

Finally, another challenge refers to the threat that capitalist relations pose to self-sustaining economies; it goes without saying that, in today's globalized economy, it is not easy to remain outside market-economy logics of exchange¹⁶⁶.

3.2.3. *Knowledge paradigms*

From the critique to the concept of modernity, conceived as a Western way of thinking which places individuals as centers of the universe and which envisages a unique way to see and to study the world – i.e. modern science – it follows that the only knowledge that is scientific justified is the one that has been generated within Western borders. The development paradigm, seen as economic growth and material progress, has been conceived by countries of the West and follows the Eurocentric principles; development research is produced according to those standards, and all other forms of non-Western knowledge are deemed deviant and inferior. Until now, programs that aimed at achieving progress have not been centered on 'Global South' perspective, rather they have been focused on how Western countries conceive progress – through industrialization – and, in general, on the attempt of creating a unique world, built after 'Global North' image¹⁶⁷.

It seems thus obvious that colonial legacies are deeply felt in the scientific knowledge production systems; when talking about research projects on development, they are usually conducted by Western scholars, who are inevitably influenced from their cultures and their way of thinking. In fact, researchers coming from the so called 'developed countries' rarely investigate in the colonial period the causes of social

¹⁶⁶ A. Kothari *et al.*, *Pluriverse, A Post-Development Dictionary*, Tulika Books, Authorsupfront, 2019 India, pp. 151-153.

¹⁶⁷ A. Ziai, *Exploring Post-development, theory and practice, problems and perspectives*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York 2007, p. 18-30.

injustice in African and Asian countries. Moreover, even if theoretically researchers should maintain a scientific approach of unbiased observation, they are often conditioned by their cultural prejudices when conducting researches, tending to carry forward the Western way of thinking as dominant theory compared to the others¹⁶⁸.

Even when research programs are conducted by scholars coming from the so-called 'Global South', Northern institutions and Northern-based scholars tend to set research agendas and questions, determining how resources will be allocated and controlling if the objectives set have been correctly pursued. These mechanisms generate power imbalances, calling into question the ethics of knowledge production¹⁶⁹.

Another issue that could be noticed in researches conducted by the so called 'Global North' scholars lies in the language of publication; studies are usually disseminated in Western languages – e.g. English, French, Spanish, or German – and they are rarely published, or traduced, in local languages, even if conducted in non-Western countries¹⁷⁰.

In order to change perspective, it seems necessary to demand epistemic justice; in doing so, the first fundamental course of action is to ask oneself questions like “who produces knowledge” or “what, and for whom, knowledge is produced”. After that, it will be deemed appropriate to create emancipatory bottom-up theories, which will engender socioeconomic change and transformation, adopting unconventional pedagogies and values to achieve a clear turnaround of knowledge production.

In this regard, it seems important to briefly explain what features pedagogy should have in a post-development and completely decolonized environment. Fortunately, there is a growing awareness that knowledge is socially constructed and that reflects the structural power relations of a given society and, for this reason, it does not constitute a true and objective representation of reality in its entirety¹⁷¹. Being knowledge socially constructed and living in a world with endless types of societies, it follows that decolonial learning should be based upon the epistemological dialogue between different

¹⁶⁸ R.N. Pailey, *De-centring the 'White Gaze' of Development*, Institute of Social Studies, the Hague, 2020, pp. 729-740.
Accessed at: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/dech.12550?saml_referrer (February 2022).

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁷¹ A. Kothari et al., *Pluriverse, A Post-Development Dictionary*, Tulika Books, Authorsupfront, 2019 India, pp. 271-273.

knowledges; the principle of incompleteness of all knowledges constitutes the prerequisite for the dialogue among different realities, thus challenging the monoculture of Western scientific knowledge and using it within a counter-hegemonic framework. This practice of dialogue between forms of knowledge is known as ‘ecology of knowledges’ and it has been developed by the scholar Boaventura de Sousa Santos in one of his books called *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*¹⁷². This kind of practice should be certainly taken into consideration when creating and implementing development programs for ‘Global South’ countries; modern scientific understanding shall be brought into question and make it dialogue with indigenous forms of knowledge, in order to realize mutual comprehension between cultures. Especially, traditional knowledges and practices should be respected and protected; all societies shall maintain their independence of thought within education fields, but also in the general organization of social relationships, without imposing mainstream socio-economic theories on how it should work this or that society.

Finally, it is appropriate to make reference to the education system of Rojava self-administered canton; in this way, the concept of ‘ecology of knowledges’ and of ‘de-colonial pedagogy’ will be further clarified.

In Northern and Eastern Syria, the educational system is built for coexistence based on equal rights, for the dialogue between different languages, cultures and histories of peoples. Thus, the education system focuses on plurality and multilingualism. In elementary schools, up to the third grade, teaching takes place in the respective mother tongue. Starting from the fourth grade, children learn languages of people they live with and lessons are held in two languages; with the fifth grade, foreign language teaching begins. In concrete terms, this means that Arab, Kurdish and Suryoye (Assyrian) children study in their mother tongue until the third year of elementary school.

Teaching materials contain both the history and the culture of each society present in Syria; in Northern and Eastern Syria, about 790 thousand students are educated according to this model.

The most important feature about this way of teaching relies on the relationship between teachers and students. While in the previous system, teaching was based mainly on fear

¹⁷² B. de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2016, New York, pp. 296-330.

and violence, in the new system students share responsibility for school life and can actively participate in decision-making. Scholastic committees are formed in each school to favor the creation of a democratic and participatory learning environment; also the educational model of the universities is based on free and democratic thinking. In addition, sanctioning mechanisms have been developed for teachers who use physical and psychological violence.

Besides that, there are countless academies, specialized faculties open to all citizens, for different fields; academies, committees and councils must be composed, according to emancipator parameters and to ethnic and religious affiliations¹⁷³.

3.2.4. *Universalization of the informal: degrowth and the 'Global North'*

Recalling the question of the supremacy of exclusion over inclusion in the capital-centered society, and drawing attention to the tendency of universalizing Western values as best suited to all societies, it seems necessary to challenge 'Global North' conception of progress and to eventually consider, also within the European Union, a reactivation of the '*political*', intended as the phenomenon that breaks the order for the purpose of creating a new social collectivity. As explained in the subsection concerning the political system in a post-development perspective, the creation of a new pluralized universality has not to be achieved only vis-à-vis 'Global South' countries, it should be treated as a systemic change, through the universalization of the *informal*¹⁷⁴.

In the context of the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, the European Union should pursue a path of re-politicization, through the conceiving of the existence of a pluriverse, a set of alternative possible worlds, where plurality is the keyword: 'ecology of knowledges' seems to be the synopsis of how social structures should be built within a system of supranational cooperation. In doing so, it is necessary to abandon any logic of hegemony (political, economic, or cognitive), promoting dialogue among different,

¹⁷³ N. Koc, *Dalla rivoluzione del Rojava è nata una società nuova*, il Manifesto, 26th January 2021. Accessed at: < <https://ilmanifesto.it/dalla-rivoluzione-del-rojava-e-nata-una-societa-nuova/> > (February 2022).

¹⁷⁴ A. Ziai, *Exploring Post-development, theory and practice, problems and perspectives*, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York 2007, pp. 63-77.

non-hierarchical structured, realities, thus avoiding that one system prevails over another.

Nowadays, however, it seems evident that the European Union, and in general Western international institutions, promote their own path towards development, cutting commercial or financial deals, and fostering Western values as the only legitimate principles to follow.

Furthermore, the constant pursuit of surplus value at the hands of the capital and its drive for accumulation led to the establishment of power relations based upon inequality, and the creation of centers of capital accumulation (the ‘Global North’) and dependent regions (the ‘Global South’) that, according to both the Marxian thinking and the post-development discourse, are the causes of poverty, but also of structural exclusion of the dependent regions. The suggestion given by post-development advocates is the struggling against the power relations originated in the ‘Global North’; the striving for the endless growth and the unconditional progress as the human destiny need to be challenged, and the decolonization of the economic thinking should be carried out¹⁷⁵.

In this respect, the degrowth project, elaborated by Serge Latouche, seems to be one of the possible solutions which abandons the idea of economic growth to embrace the imaginary of the ‘frugal abundance’ hence the success of the limitations of human needs; as mentioned in the previous subsections, ideals of sharing, conviviality, simplicity, caring, commons, are the main features of a degrowth society. This project should trigger a rupture with the conception of development as need of productivity; in this sense, the word ‘degrowth’ should not be interpreted literally, it does not refer neither to negative growth, nor to economic recession¹⁷⁶. Rather, it relates to a political slogan that aims to remind people the meanings of ‘limits’ and ‘frugality’; the objective of degrowth paradigm is to outline a series of alternatives to the building of a non-productivist society, whose foundations rests on eight cornerstones (8 ‘R’s): re-evaluate, re-conceptualize, restructure, relocate, redistribute, reduce, reuse, and recycle¹⁷⁷. However, it seems important to underline that a degrowth society cannot be established

¹⁷⁵ S. Latouche, *Farewell to Growth*, Polity Pr, Cambridge 2009, pp. 85-93.

¹⁷⁶ A. Kothari et al., *Pluriverse, A Post-Development Dictionary*, Tulika Books, Authorsupfront, 2019 India, pp. 148-151.

¹⁷⁷ F. De Maria et al., *What Is Degrowth? From an Activist Slogan to a Social Movement*, Environmental Values, 2013, pp. 191-215.

in the same way everywhere; it will take different forms in the various areas of the world¹⁷⁸.

For the purpose of the present analysis, whose objective is to challenge Western interventionism in MENA region, it seems worth mentioning the view of a post-development scholar, Aram Ziai, who supports the degrowth strategy which aims at ‘Undeveloping the North’¹⁷⁹. As mentioned several times, the sustenance of the West heavily depend on the surplus extraction from low-income countries, which are being deprived from both their means of living and their autonomy of choice; for this reason, there seems to be an absolute necessity of reducing, or even eliminating, the subtraction of resources – both human and natural – needed to produce material goods.

In considering the issue, Aram Ziai focuses its attention on five principles that should be followed in order to carry out an alternative post-development strategy to realize degrowth as a political concept: first, he deems necessary to prevent Western countries to enforce military interventions to gain access to resources – the slogan ‘no blood for oil’ against the war in Iraq better expresses the idea. Second, it is fundamental to block the global sector from forcing local actors to being included in the international competition system; third, there is the need of eliminating privileges of the so called ‘formal labor’ since it excludes a large part of the population from the benefits of the welfare state, which may ensure social provisions for all. The fourth principle regards the possibility of a direct appropriation of both relationships and spaces (‘land and freedom’) with the aim at satisfying the needs. Finally, measures for ensuring the survival, such as relocate production thus preventing the usage of wide areas by the large-scale enterprises, are deemed fundamental to ensure food security both in the South and in the North¹⁸⁰.

These are some of the principles that the ‘Global North’, and in particular the European Union, shall adopt vis-à-vis North African and Middle Eastern countries, according to a decolonized pattern of cooperation. Unfortunately, there are several obstacles to the

¹⁷⁸ A. Kothari *et al.*, *Pluriverse, A Post-Development Dictionary*, Tulika Books, Authorsupfront, 2019 India, pp. 148-151.

¹⁷⁹ *ivi*, pp. 326-329.

¹⁸⁰ U. Brand, M. Wissen, *Crises and Continuity of Capitalist Society-Nature Relationships: The Imperial Mode of Living and The Limits to Environmental Governance*, Review of International Political Economy, 2013, pp. 687-711.

implementation of a strategy that goes beyond interests and power relations: in the next paragraph some of these challenges will be examined in depth.

3.3. Obstacles to non-Eurocentric development in North Africa and Middle East

3.3.1. Geopolitical relationships: intergovernmental character of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation

As deeply analyzed within the first chapter, the international relations that exist between MENA region and Western countries have been more or less formalized within the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). One would expect that, having granted the legitimacy of action to the European Union, international relations assume a supranational character which definitively abandons the claims of certain countries over others, whose interests shall be protected.

Instead, the cooperation between the European Union and MENA region is mainly regulated by the EU Council, composed by the ministers of all Member States; it seems thus clear that the decisions taken in the field of foreign policy, may follow a direction requested by a particular Member State which desires to defend its own interests in the area of action¹⁸¹.

To better understand how the decision-making works within the ENP, it seems worth underlining the tasks of both the EU Commission and the EU Council in this framework. The European Commission sets the Agenda of the political and economic priorities in the framework of the European Southern Neighborhood Policy, proposing legislative acts or even packages of measures to be implemented in a given Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF); the EU Council examines the proposals drawn up by the Commission through its ‘Council preparatory bodies’, which are highly specialized working parties and committees, which are set up by Coreper and which deal with specific subjects; the Mashreq/Maghreb Working Party (MAMA) is an

¹⁸¹ H. Wallace *et al.*, *Policy-making in the European Union*, Eight edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2020, pp. 389-399.

example of working group which deals with EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and cooperation with regard to Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Western Sahara conflict, the Palestinian Authority, Syria and Tunisia. This Working Party is composed by experts of each MS and it is chaired by the delegate of the State which holds the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU; after the examination, the proposals will be submitted to the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), one of the formation where the EU Council sits¹⁸².

It seems therefore clear that, in the framework of Common Foreign Security Policy (CFSP), the power of the EU Commission is leveled by that of the Council, which is in the position of examining and eventually amending the proposals and then implementing them at its discretion, almost without involving the European Parliament, which, as already explained, has only the power to provide running commentary on CFSP issues¹⁸³.

The foregoing comments led to the following initial conclusion: holding the EU Council this almost exclusive power on matters of EU foreign policy and, for this reason, being the CFSP a merely intergovernmental field of action, it certainly seems reasonable to assume that certain economic or political proposals which are not supported by some MSs may be blocked or amended by these countries, preventing a constructive political action towards, in this specific case, Middle-East and North African countries. In addition, as will be seen below, lobbies which push for action within the EU Council are not regulated and, being the Council the principal actor in the context of CFSP, interest groups which are interested in shaping the Agenda of EU foreign policy can operate freely and outside any piece of legislation.

At this point, in order to support the thesis of the colonial legacies which are still visible in MENA region, it seems necessary to briefly analyze some of the interests that former colonial powers continue to preserve in the area under study. In doing so, the emblematic case of France is being treated in the present analysis in that it constitutes

¹⁸² European Council, Council of the European Union, *Mashreq/Maghreb Working Party*, Meeting Information.

Accessed at: <[https://www.consilium.europa.eu/it/meetings/mpo/2022/2/informal-vtc-mashreq-maghreb-\(315938\)/>](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/it/meetings/mpo/2022/2/informal-vtc-mashreq-maghreb-(315938)/>) (February 2022).

¹⁸³ H. Wallace *et al.*, *Policy-making in the European Union*, Eight edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2020, pp. 389-399.

the country which has maintained the strongest bonds with its former colonies; the term 'Françafrique' has been coined to demonstrate this connection¹⁸⁴.

As evidence of this is the fact that French and African Heads of State meet regularly at the France-Africa summit which provides a forum for discussion about political and economic issues. Moreover, France continues to play an important role in the political evolution of the region, as demonstrated by the large number of French military personnel involved in major international missions in Africa. Economic relations are also important; in addition to privileged commercial ties with the African, Caribbean and Pacific group of countries (ACP countries) as part of the common commercial policy of the European Union, there is a strong presence, in Africa, of French multinationals interested in raw materials, especially in the energy field, but also in the strategic sector – such as transport and telecommunications. Although the majority of French foreign direct investment is, in fact, directed towards OECD countries, since 2008, investment flows towards the African continent have increased significantly and represent, in absolute terms, a not insignificant share. Finally, French influence is visible in the "franc zone", in which 14 former colonies of Central and Western Africa participate and which use a currency, the CFA franc (from "Communauté Financière Africaine"), that was once tied to the French franc and today it is anchored to the euro¹⁸⁵.

Furthermore, the axis of relations with Africa and the South-Eastern shores of the Mediterranean reflects the historical condition of some of these territories as former French colonies and, nowadays, France's government has a strong interest in maintaining its influence in these areas. This is demonstrated, for example, by the creation, in 2008, of the Union for the Mediterranean, a body that brings together the countries of the European Union, North Africa and the Middle East, strongly backed by President Nicolas Sarkozy and aimed at re-launching Euro-Mediterranean relations. Another evidence of France's interests in MENA region can be found in its direct involvement, during the Libyan crisis of 2011, in the support to the National Transition

¹⁸⁴ B. Nicolini, *Françafrique, fu vera indipendenza?*, in *Popoli*, Maggio 2010, p. 31.

¹⁸⁵ A. Ginori, *Francia, non esiste una "tassa coloniale": ecco cos'è il franco Fca invocato da di Maio*, la Repubblica, 21st January 2019.

Accessed at:

https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2019/01/21/news/francia_tassa_coloniale_fact_checking-217085123/ (February 2022)

Council (TNC) which self-proclaimed in February 2011 as the only legitimate representative of Libya¹⁸⁶.

While France has maintained an overall socio-political influence in the former colonies, the other European countries, among which Great Britain and Italy, are operating in a more roundabout way; they pursue their 'imperialist' aims mainly through commercial agreements, constrained financial assistance, and sustaining the actions of multinational corporations that bear the name of certain EU countries – e.g. the Italian ENI or the English Shell plc.

Since 1980s, when neo-liberal development pattern began to be used by International Financial Institutions, a lot of European countries, and the EU itself, started to act in close cooperation with both the IMF and the World Bank by sustaining the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), or other measures, directed towards North African and Middle Eastern countries. Being such programs directed at both the containment of the foreign debt of those States and the improvement of the international trade, European countries might have benefit from such situations to reaffirm strong economic ties with former colonies – i.e. through direct investments directed towards MENA region, off-shoring of multinational corporations in low-wages countries etc.

In the following subsection, the emblematic cases of two large companies, ENI and Shell, which have benefit from oil extractions in North Africa and Middle East, will be examined, confirming that alternative forms of non-Eurocentric development seem to be impossible within an international order where Western countries and companies are almost totally free to intervene in 'Global South' to sustain its own economic growth, while imposing to African and Middle Eastern countries an industrial development grounded in a system of inequalities.

¹⁸⁶ The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, *Libya Revolt of 2011*, Encyclopedia Britannica, last updated: 5th February 2020.
Accessed at: <<https://www.britannica.com/event/Libya-Revolt-of-2011/additional-info#history>>
(February 2022)

3.3.2. Lobbies actions and their influence on EU decision making: case study on both think tanks and multinational corporations

Due to democratic deficit within the European Union, public policies need an on-going legitimacy in order to shape the decision-making process; interest groups – both private and public – are the actors which are able to influence the policy making of the EU and to restore, at least theoretically, the pluralism where lacking. In this subsection, the role of think tanks and academics in shaping the EU foreign policy, particularly as concern the Euro-Mediterranean policy, will be analyzed in dept in order to understand if they are able to effectively influence the EU action towards North African and Middle-East countries and if they are sufficiently independent and free to express their own views without being influenced by various institutional and non-institutional actors.¹⁸⁷

In the context of foreign policy and international cooperation, the role of States is getting weaker due to the challenges posed by the new global order and by non-States actors which, in the international arena, are sometimes more powerful than countries and which further complicate the network of political and economic interconnections between different areas of the world. In this respect, the role of experts, think tanks (TTs) and NGOs in supporting and orienting the EU foreign policy is of key importance since it provides knowledge and it should also act as facilitator between State and non-State actors.

Nevertheless, the transfer of knowledge within the policy process is not so easy to implement; it may happen mainly in two phases of the policy process – agenda-setting and policy formulation – and its completion depends on whether the policymaker is willing to pay attention to experts and to adopt their advices or not.

In the agenda-setting phase, whose main actor is the EU Commission, it seems easier for experts to press for some arguments to be inserted into the government's agenda, probably because of the more pluralistic and democratic nature of the participating actors. On the contrary, in the policy formulation phase, which in the context of EU foreign affairs is almost completely monopolized by the EU Council, only 'qualified

¹⁸⁷ A. Longhini, *Theorizing the Role of Experts in Shaping Euro-Mediterranean Politics, at a Time of Erosion of Democratic Legitimacy and Emergence of Contested Issues*, European Institute of the Mediterranean, 4th July 2021.

Accessed at: <https://www.iemed.org/publication/theorizing-the-role-of-experts-in-shaping-euro-mediterranean-politics-at-a-time-of-erosion-of-democratic-legitimacy-and-emergence-of-contested-issues/> (February 2022)

interlocutors' can participate by providing their expertise contribution; in this way, the support of experts and think tanks does not seem to be very valuable if given only during the agenda-setting phase, since proposals have to be analyzed and revised, during the policy formulation phase, by the EU Council, thus making the work of experts not always necessary.

Before providing some cases of think tanks working on Euro-Mediterranean affairs, it is worth noting the Transparency Register, established in 2011 for the purpose of both controlling the lobbying activity within the EU and making transparent the dialogue between EU policy makers, has recently become mandatory – for interest groups – after an inter-institutional agreement between the EU Commission, the EU Parliament and the EU Council¹⁸⁸.

However it remains loopholes, especially with regard to the EU Council's activity: in fact, having analyzed the EU Transparency Register, there is no trace of a list of meetings between the interest groups examined and the Council – while there are evidences of meetings with the Commission – and sometimes financial information of certain lobbies are not entirely provided.

The biggest network of think tanks which deals with the study of Euro-Med affairs is the EuroMeSCo; it is financed by the European Institute for the Mediterranean (IEMed) and by the European Union, and it has 106 members from the EU and Eastern and Southern Mediterranean – inter alia: Istituto Affari Internazionali, Carnegie Middle East, Barcelona Centre for International Affairs, Al Ahram, Polish Institute of International Affairs etc. EuroMeSCo¹⁸⁹ favors the constructive dialogue among researchers on the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, but it is less involved in the political talks with EU institutions since, as already mentioned, the European External Action Service (EEAS) does not usually work in direct contact with think tanks, maybe preferring influences of a different kind.

¹⁸⁸ The European Parliament, *European Parliament decision of 27 April 2021 on the conclusion of an interinstitutional agreement between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, and the European Commission on a mandatory transparency register*, Brussels, 27th April 2021. Accessed at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0130_EN.html> (March 2022)

¹⁸⁹ B. Khader, *The European Union and the Arab World: from the Rome Treaty to the Arab Spring*, EuroMeSCo, European Institute of the Mediterranean, March 2013. Accessed at: <<https://www.euromesco.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/201303-EuroMeSCo-Paper-17.pdf>> (February 2022)

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the “EuroMeSCo Policy Briefings” have been inaugurated in 2016 and consist of a series of meetings between the experts of EuroMeSCo and EU policy makers, in particular the EU Council working group known as Mashreq/Maghreb Working Party (MAMA); by the way, within the Transparency Register, there are no lists of meetings between EuroMeSCo think tanks and EU Council. However, EuroMeSCo experts have managed to influence Euro-Mediterranean policy giving their contribution to the review of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) in 2015, and to the drawing up of the EU Global Strategy in 2016¹⁹⁰.

The last case reported is that of the Bussola Institute, an European think tank which reflect United Arab Emirates’ interests and policy goals in the Gulf area, pushing for the lift arms embargoes and the maintaining of UAE’s ‘soft-superpower’ ambitions towards Middle-East countries; due to the deficiencies of the EU Transparency Register, even if the Bussola Institute is registered, it is not known exactly about the contracts, the clients and also the financial information involved in this lobbying activity. United Arab Emirates push for their interests both in the US and in Europe, but in the United States there is a strong and binding regulation on lobbying, while in the EU lobbying is soft-regulated and, for this reason, easier to circumvent. Furthermore, the United Arab Emirates, according to leaks, have official diplomatic channels with the EU and, for this reason, lobbies and think tanks representing UAE’s interests may be more easily considered as ‘qualified interlocutors’ by the EU Council, making the dialogue between experts and institutions more convenient¹⁹¹.

In other words, the politics of expertise (PoE) could be considered a positive phenomenon of the present day since, as already explained, it may provide knowledge on specific issues that can be taken advantage of by policy makers who, sometimes, are not prepared to cope with certain developments on international relations and foreign policy. Regrettably, however, experts and think tanks are not always independent in their research activities since their financial stability usually depends on public or private funds; as a result, they must be careful not to be too critical about politicized

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁹¹ Corporate Europe Observatory, *Lobbying the EU, How vulnerable are the EU institutions to undue corporate influence?, United Arab Emirates’ growing legion of lobbyists support its ‘soft superpower’ ambitions in Brussels*, December 2020.

Accessed at: <<https://corporateeurope.org/en/lobbying-the-eu>> (March 2022)

issues, and those who maintain their independence of thought have fewer opportunities to be considered as ‘qualified interlocutors’ by EU institutions¹⁹².

Instead, turning to private actors and analyzing a document published by the Transparency Register at the end of 2015, the meetings between EU Commissioners and lobbyists between December 2014 and December 2015 had been about 7,084, 75% of them with companies and industry representatives, 17% with NGOs, 4% with think tanks and 2% with local authorities¹⁹³.

As of 1st March 2022, the interest groups appearing within the Transparency Register are 13.608; among them 6.941 are in-house lobbyists and trade, commercial and professional associations – i.e. international companies – 3.493 are NGOs and only 965 are think tanks and research institutes¹⁹⁴.

It seems therefore clear that, even in the framework of European External Action Service and in the particular one of Southern European Neighborhood Policy, in-house lobbyists are the interest groups which are more likely to influence decision making process within the EU, due also to the fact that the process of integration promoted by the EU vis-à-vis North African and Middle-East countries is of mainly economic nature. In this respect, it seems appropriate to mention the case of two international oil companies which operate in the areas of North Africa and Middle-East countries: Shell plc and ENI, two in-house lobbyists which are both inscribed in the EU Transparency Register, but which do not seem to conduct a genuine transparent business in Euro-Med area.

Talking about Shell, it is one of the companies with the highest EU lobbying budget – in 2021 the budget amounts to € 4.963.382 – and ‘foreign affairs and security policy’ is one of its areas of interest which is connected with the EU policy sector called ‘Energy

¹⁹² A. Longhini, *Theorizing the Role of Experts in Shaping Euro-Mediterranean Politics, at a Time of Erosion of Democratic Legitimacy and Emergence of Contested Issues*, European Institute of the Mediterranean, 4th July 2021.

Accessed at: <<https://www.iemed.org/publication/theorizing-the-role-of-experts-in-shaping-euro-mediterranean-politics-at-a-time-of-erosion-of-democratic-legitimacy-and-emergence-of-contested-issues/>> (February 2022)

¹⁹³ Transparency International, the global coalition against corruption, EU Office, *7,000 and counting Lobby meetings of the European Commission*, December 2015.

Accessed at: <<https://transparency.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Lobby-Meetings-European-Commission.pdf>> (March 2022)

¹⁹⁴ Information provided by the Transparency Register of the EU official website.

Accessed at: <<https://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/homePage.do>> (March 2022)

security in EU's external policy' which, in the context of Southern European Neighborhood Policy, falls under the purpose of creating an integrated Mediterranean energy market based on the use of natural gas and renewable energy.

Royal Dutch Shell, however, has a considerable presence in the United Arab Emirates, identified in recent years as a tax heaven; the company have developed a partnership with Dubai authorities for the purpose of working jointly on exploration and supplying of oil resources. It seems clear that Royal Dutch Shell have off-shored its activities, while continuing to be financed by the EU in its efforts for the promotion of the use of renewable energy and natural gases. Shell is present in Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Jordan, Egypt, Qatar and Pakistan and its main activity in these areas is the petrochemical, manufacturing products from the distillation of petroleum, usually not considering the need for renewable energy, at least in Middle-East and North-African countries¹⁹⁵.

Another multinational corporation which operates in North Africa and Middle East is Eni S.p.A.; in 2018 the consortium composed by Total (France), Eni (Italy) and Novatek (Russia) have signed two agreements with the government of Lebanon for offshore oil and gas exploration and production in the blocks 4 and 9 of Mediterranean sea. More or less 8% of the block 9 is disputed between Lebanon and Israel and the explorations, planned for 2019, would have been carried out at 25 km from the area disputed. Over the past two years, the tensions between Israel and Lebanon has intensified and the two countries are expected to find an agreement on the maritime borders; however, the consortium composed by Total, Eni and Novatek is operating in a dynamic of conflict and indeed it is far from being constructive to the peace-building process between the two countries¹⁹⁶.

Furthermore, the European Court of Justice is almost completely excluded from the dynamics of the EU external action or in the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy and, for this reason, it cannot intervene in judicial issues between Eni and the two countries, should it be necessary.

¹⁹⁵ Shell plc, *Shell's petrochemical activities in the Middle East*.

Accessed at: <<https://www.shell.com/business-customers/chemicals/factsheets-speeches-and-articles/factsheets/shell-petrochemicals-middle-east.html>> (March 2022)

¹⁹⁶ H. Khalife, *Extractives hub policy brief for Lebanon, "Lebanon's disputed maritime boundaries: what can be done?"*, Champions Coordinator, Extractives Hub, May 2020.

Despite the fact that, as analyzed, international companies which act as lobbyists for the European Southern Neighborhood Policy do not always care about socio-political integration between Euro-Mediterranean countries, sustainable development, respect of human rights and gender justice in North Africa and Middle-East, these multinationals play a fundamental role in shaping the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) towards a mainly economic integration, receiving funds by the EU and being almost completely free to operate in Maghreb and Mashreq countries, almost without restrictions. It seems appropriate to assume that, within the context of CFSP, in-house lobbyists and trade, commercial and professional associations have better chance of being considered ‘qualified interlocutors’ by the EU Council, than think tanks or other academic institutions.

After this in-depth analysis of how interest groups succeed in influencing the European Southern Neighborhood Policy, it could be argued that their actions may constitute an obstacle to alternative forms of non-Western centric development; think tanks, if not sufficiently independent, may pursue the interests of the strongest actors – from which they receive funding – while in-house lobbyists and trade associations, due to their capitalist nature of accumulating profits, are certainly not interested in changing the development perspective in MENA region.

3.3.3. Internal problems: corruption and lack of democracy

Another obstacle that interposes itself to the rebuilding of social structures in North Africa and Middle East is the deeply rooted corruption which characterizes the region. In fact, as exhaustively explained both in the first and in the second chapters, governments of those countries often implement repressive policies with the aim of quelling the social discontent; these kind of measures, however, are not usually directed towards the whole population, in such a way that elites and privileged people are being excluded from the effects of the hardest policies¹⁹⁷. What results therefore is a hierarchical construction of society, in which the less-privileged part of the population always pays the highest price; this construction of society constitutes, in fact, the exact

¹⁹⁷ T. Eaton *et al.*, *Tackling corruption is focus for MENA in 2022*, Chatham House, 2nd February 2022. Accessed at: <<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/02/tackling-corruption-focus-mena-2022>> (March 2022)

opposite of a direct democracy in which all individuals are deemed equal and participate in the same way in the decision-making process.

And how about economy? In North African and Middle Eastern States, governments have always made themselves available to implement restrictive fiscal policies when the IMF or the World Bank required, as conditionality, to reduce the public expenditure, the subsidies, or to raise the taxes. Once again, these measures have always affected only a part of the population, while leaving untouched the other portion, and repressing all uprisings directed at denouncing the adoption of policies which contributed to increase poverty and social injustice¹⁹⁸.

Moreover, authorities of MENA countries are accustomed to make agreements with multinational corporations – such as Lebanon in the previously examined case of ENI's oil extractions – often thinking only about the economic benefits that derives from the action of enterprises, rather than considering the socio-political effects of such interventions.

The 2021 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) shows¹⁹⁹ that 80% of the countries in the region have stagnated over the last ten years. Transparency International, an NGO which deals with corruption, exposes grand corruption: systemic corruption involving high-level public officials and large sums of money, often accompanied by serious human rights violations.

Analyzing the case of Tunisia, Transparency International deplors that it has become "an unfortunate example of how democratic gains can be lost". The promising democracy has recently been plunged into uncertainty after special measures taken by President Kais Saied. These include the closure of the anti-corruption agency and the placement of the agency's head under house arrest, "which weaken existing accountability mechanisms and raise concerns about the fate of whistleblowers who expose corruption"²⁰⁰.

In Morocco, an emergency law not only deprived citizens of their freedom of movement, assembly, and speech, but was also used as legal cover to target government

¹⁹⁸ T. Radwan, *The impact and influence of International Financial Institutions on the Middle East and North Africa*, Friederich Ebert Stiftung, Tunis, Tunisia, 2020, pp. 12-61.

¹⁹⁹ Transparency International, the global coalition against corruption, *CPI 2021 for Middle East & North Africa: systemic corruption endangers democracy and human rights*, 25th January 2022.

Accessed at: <<https://www.transparency.org/en/news/cpi-2021-middle-east-north-africa-systemic-corruption-endangers-democracy-human-rights>> (March 2022)

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*

critics and human rights defenders denouncing the (mis)management of the country's pandemic response.

Transparency International also reported that Egypt has been one of the worst "offenders" of the year with authorities punishing dissent and detaining journalists, politicians and activists. Protests have been met with a brutal response, including the illegal use of force and mass arrests; moreover, freedoms of assembly and speech remain severely restricted in the country.

Corruption in the Middle East and North Africa is systemic, according to Transparency International, with deep roots in both institutions and daily life²⁰¹; however, as the present analysis has underlined, it appears that Western interventions, of economic and financial nature, sometimes gains greater foothold in corruption systems, thus making a change in perspective difficult to realize.

²⁰¹ *ibid.*

Conclusion

This work have examined and challenged, with a broader perspective, the European Union and international organizations policies and programs towards North Africa and Middle East. In dealing with Western interventions with a critical perspective, post-development alternatives have been investigated, trying to envisage possible solutions to the perpetuation of social exclusion over inclusion. Nevertheless, the visualization of the bottom line does not appear so straightforward, because the globalization system and the myriad of actors involved in this multi-polar order make the mapping of all actions difficult to conceive. However, some concluding remarks may be provided, with the expectation that, sooner or later, the dialogue on the Mediterranean undergoes a radical change of perspective.

Historically retracing, as exhaustively explained within the present analysis, the international relations between Western countries and MENA region have been laid on unequal basis; the willingness of the former colonial powers to protect their interests in North Africa and Middle East was surely superior to the desire to establish cooperation dialogues between the two sides of the Mediterranean.

Over the years, the situation does not appear to be improving: even if the Barcelona Process of 1995 had as original objective the promotion of a dialogue among peoples and not between institutions, the intergovernmental character of all partnerships and the variety of non-state powerful actors intervening in the integration process between EU and MENA region, have resulted instead in the continuation of the old paradigm.

To provide further proof of the fact that the international dialogue between Western countries and MENA region has never changed, the ‘cooperation people-to-people’ approach, one of the cornerstones of the Barcelona Process, is here challenged. This paradigm theoretically provides for a greater involvement of civil society through a decentralized system of cooperation in which protagonists are non-State actors (both local and international), who try to foster understanding among peoples and their rapprochement. In this respect, it’s worth mentioning one of the critiques to this

approach of development aid; Jeremy Gould²⁰², a scholar of post-development perspectives, argues that the much-vaunted ‘cooperation people-to-people’ approach collides with the privatization process actually happening at the hands of non-state actors and international institutions. In fact, there has been an increase of private international aid agencies – e.g. Oxfam, Actionaid, Save the Children, World Vision etc. – whose capital base are mostly private donations. Those agencies play a significant role in both policy formulation and implementation phases in the EU decision-making – almost all inscribed into the EU Transparency Register of interest groups – and succeed to work with (or through) weak civil society organizations in ‘recipient countries’. In this way, local bodies and movements lose their intellectual and political independence, changing their fundamental roles by becoming clients (almost exclusively commercial) of those international bodies; this process is known as ‘ngoization’.

As analyzed within the second chapter, this privatization process is actually promoted and supported by the international institutions which intervene, often in close cooperation with the European Union, within a capitalist global order thus demonstrating, following a Marxian perspective, the nature of production relations based upon the supremacy of exchange-values over use-values. The current state of affairs does not seem to provide any possibility of emancipation within the existing order.

Even if the rhetoric of the international bodies has changed with respect to the past, emphasizing the need for ‘cooperation people-to-people’, it seems worth noting that, in actual fact, the empowerment of civil society has been strongly weakened as a consequence of the policies adopted by ‘Global North’ institutions (both state and non-state actors). Thus, the penetration of an advanced democratic culture and a perspective of post-development social transformation become difficult to realize since the geopolitical and economic relationships, and in general power relations based upon capital, have demonstrated a pervasive strength, able to creep in all aspects of social life. In this sense, turning away from this perspective, and trying to realize a change in social relations, is by no means easy to implement.

²⁰² A. Kothari *et al.*, *Pluriverse, A Post-Development Dictionary*, Tulika Books, Autorsupfront, India 2019, pp. 34-36.

The pervasive rhetoric of development as material progress has been internalized by the ‘Global South’ itself which, seeing the prosperity of some Western countries, develops the desire to emulate ‘Global North’ wellness, without realizing that cooperation is still based on inequality. Furthermore, the strategies implemented by the international bodies vis-à-vis North Africa and Middle East are also aimed at strengthening the ‘human capital’ – according to recent neo-classical and neo-liberal reviews – in conformity with Western values, such as modern education and science. The very concept of ‘human capital’ conceives people, no longer just the workforce, as productive factors in their entirety, reducing them to exchange values.

Another means through which international organizations implement development programs for MENA region is the transfer, towards those countries, of technological innovations, which are not neutral, being strongly affected by capitalist production relations, and serving as factor of exploitation through the use of cheap workforce in low-income countries.

In order to change perspective regarding the dialogue with MENA region, instead of conceiving it as a purely economic resource, the Mediterraneanism²⁰³ – or Meridian thinking – should be considered as a political ideal. Taking into consideration the physical-geographical setting of the two sides of the Mediterranean sea, one belonging to the European Union, the other one to MENA region, and referring to the etymology of Meridianism, the sea could be conceived as a means of ‘mediating the lands’²⁰⁴. While the land could be a metaphor of rootedness and identity, the sea is here envisioned as liberty and emancipation, a means through which the individual may escape from the ‘self’ while opening to the ‘other’.

Exclusively choosing the land means the rejection of the ‘other’ and the excessive attachment to ‘identity’, while solely opting for the sea implies exposing oneself to the rejection of all differences embracing a purely universalistic vision. Mediterraneanism consists of allowing the coexistence between ‘emancipation’ and ‘roots’, thus enabling the creation of a political horizon of conviviality, based upon post-development values, between different civilizations.

²⁰³ *ivi*, 238-239.

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*

Finally, it is worth underlining that the concept of Meridianism, nowadays, finds itself in crisis; the failings of the Arab Spring uprisings seem to have temporarily denied the possibility for social alternatives in the region, while the Western interventionism have consistently limited the opportunities of action outside a market-oriented perspective. Moreover, the political principles behind the conception of Mediterraneanism, to counteract the Western modernity, appear to be weak and ineffective.

The question remains whether the MENA countries will actually manage to perform a 'delinking' from the 'Global North' perspective, implementing systems of self-sufficient democratic economies, while maintaining a socio-cultural dialogue with the other side of the Mediterranean.

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